

The Names of God



by Venerable Leonardus Lessius, S.J.

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Author's Preface

If we had remained in the state of innocence, meditation on divine things would have been easy. It would have been a constant delight to walk in the presence of God and to excite in the heart acts of faith, hope, charity, thanksgiving, humility, reverence, obedience and the like. In that happy state man enjoyed a very special assistance, which enabled him to know his Creator and to fulfil with the greatest joy all the duties that the various virtues enjoined. But when that blissful condition ceased in consequence of sin, this help was withdrawn, and our natural weakness made the contemplation of divine things irksome and the practice of virtue difficult. Earthly and material things now appeal to us powerfully and we readily give days to discuss and examine them. The wars and battles of history or fiction fascinate us, but we have to force ourselves to contemplate the things of heaven. The perfections or attributes of God are particularly difficult, and yet there is nothing more helpful to salvation, nor more agreeable and consoling when once we have made a little progress; none are more efficacious for the acquisition of virtue nor better calculated to clarify the mind and to throw light on all the duties of life. For the Holy Scripture says: "To know Thee is perfect justice and to know Thy justice and Thy power is the root of immortality." (Wisdom 15)

Hence following the example of Saint Denis the Areopagite whose works have for fifty years exercised on me a most marvellous charm, I have resolved to explain very briefly the divine perfections or attributes ascribed to God by the Holy Books. In this short exposition I omitted designedly the testimony of the Scriptures and the Fathers and also all theological proofs in order that the reader may more readily form a clear idea of these divine attributes, excite in his heart affections worthy of such sublime considerations and by this exercise, as Saint Denis says, make his soul "*deiform*," or like unto God.

Translator's Preface

Although three hundred years have elapsed since the illustrious Leonard Lessius, S.J. wrote his treatise on "The Names of God," and in a series of "Meditative Summaries" condensed his great work on "The Divine Perfections," no English translation of either work has yet appeared. Some early versions in French and Flemish were published as far back as the seventeenth century, and Father Bouix, S.J., gave us his translation in French in 1882, but it is only now in 1912, that an effort is made to put this splendid spiritual book in the hands of English readers.

"The Names of God" - there are fifty in all - is the last work that Lessius ever wrote. Five or six days after he laid aside his manuscript the Angel of Death wrote *finis* on the story of the great man's life. The concluding chapter was fittingly entitled "God our Last End," and its closing paragraph reads as if he were gazing into the face of the Lord and expecting to be called to heaven. "During all eternity" he tells us, "all the angels and all the blessed will so rest in the vision, the love and the beatific vision of God that they will desire nothing more, but will find in Him the term of all their desires and enjoy in Him a blessed repose."

This part of the book is made up of fifty chapters, most of them very brief, but all of them replete with the sublimest theology and furnishing a superabundance of matter for devout consideration.

"The Meditative Summaries" which constitute the second half of the work are the concluding chapters of his fifteen famous treatises on "The Divine Perfections." He calls them "*Recollectiones Precatoriae*." Father Bouix who was evidently thinking of Bossuet and possibly making a mental comparison between the two men entitles them "*Elévations et Prières*" which is rather a free translation. "Meditative Summaries" we think more accurately describes their character, for they are like the *Colloquies* which Saint Ignatius recommends us to make at the end of our meditations. They are in reality a succinct resume of all the theology that had been elaborated and discussed in the previous disquisitions, combined with fervid outpourings of the heart in prayer, adoration and love. He seems to forget

the presence of his students and addresses himself directly to Almighty God. Happy students to have had a teacher with the mind of a seer and the heart of a seraph.

On account of the sublime doctrines which he is expounding, the terminology is at times unavoidably technical. But this is true only of the opening chapters. Ordinarily his language is extremely simple and he never hesitates to repeat his expressions in order to make his meaning clear. Moreover what at first seems hard to understand clarifies itself as he proceeds and even where we are unable to follow him we cannot fail to contemplate with amazement the flight of his marvellously illumined intellect into the divine mysteries.

The few explanatory notes taken from the standard treatises of philosophy and theology and appended by the translator may contribute somewhat to a better understanding of the terms employed, but the main body of the work is within the reach of ordinary readers especially those who live in the light of the Sacraments. The literary tone of the "Summaries" cannot fail to please. They are written in what rhetoricians call the cumulative style, which consists in piling up new thoughts and new aspects of things, each following closely on the other, and all hurrying onward to a sublime and splendid climax. It is like listening to the utterances of an inspired orator.

Lessius was one of the most illustrious theologians of the Society of Jesus, the glory of the University of Louvain and the especial pride of Catholic Belgium. He was born at Brecht near Antwerp in 1554; at the time when the Protestant Reformation was in full blast; when Charles V reigned in Spain, Henry II in France and Mary Tudor in England. He was 12 years old when Philip II sent the Duke of Alva to the Netherlands.

He was only 17 when he entered the University of Louvain but his unusual ability won for him almost immediately both from masters and students the title of "Prince of Philosophers." Shortly after beginning his studies in the University, he entered the Society of Jesus which was then in the 37th year of its existence.

At 20 he was teaching philosophy at Douai and continued at that work for seven consecutive years. But philosophy alone was not sufficient to absorb

his powers. He became a profound Hellenist and it is asserted by a grave historian that in two months time he mastered Greek so as to be able to converse in it. He was even then familiar with all the great theologians, the Fathers of the Church and the notable writers on Holy Scripture. He was an authority in the oriental languages, canon and civil law, history and mathematics, and conversant with medicine, besides speaking with facility several modern languages. All this was before he had reached his 27th year; so that there is small wonder he was an invalid for the rest of his life; but illness never made him work less.

When he was ordained he was sent to Rome where Suarez taught him for two years. It was this great master who emancipated him from an excessive anxiety about theological and philosophical authority. "In every question," he was told, "in which faith and morals are not involved, you are to follow your own opinion provided you can show that it is founded on reason. Such an utterance from an oracle like Suarez dissipated his fears and after that, says his biographer "the eagle took its flight."

From Rome he was recalled to Belgium to teach dogmatic theology at Louvain, and for thirty-eight years he was not only the pride of that University but one of the most brilliant theologians of his age. He was esteemed and praised by several great popes, and in 1587 when certain doctors of Louvain, probably prompted by Baius, took exception to some of his propositions, Sixtus V undertook his defense and sent a Nuncio to Belgium invested with the power of a legate *a latere* to declare in the name of the Pope that the propositions were absolutely in conformity with sound doctrine. Such a pronouncement made the reputation of Lessius world-wide and the Universities of Mayence, Treves, Ingolstadt and Louvain hastened to declare in his favor. He was consulted by theologians from all parts of the world, and his word was law for them. Paul V thanked him publicly in Rome for his labors for the Church, and years afterwards when Lessius had gone to his reward Urban VIII said of him: "I knew Leonard Lessius perfectly. I was intimately associated with him in Rome and I have always held him in the highest regard on account of his extraordinary learning. But I esteemed him incomparably more for his virtue. He was a most humble man and endowed with unusual piety. I regard him as holding a high place in heaven."

When he was sent as Delegate to the 6th and 7th General Congregations of his Order, he was consulted by the learned men of every city through which he passed. He was called "The Oracle of the Low Countries." Prince Albert who then governed Belgium took him as his adviser, and in the Council Chamber had always before him on the table the treatise of Lessius *De Jure et Justitia*. Justus Lipsius the great literary man of the period died in his arms. Lipsius had left the faith but his friend won him back again to God.

The list of his works is enormous. The annotated catalogue of them fills several pages of the great folio edition of the *Bibliotheca Scriptorum S.J.* Among the translations of some parts of his works we find two by the famous Father Schall in Chinese and one in English by a timorous Briton who had undertaken the task at the command of Sir Walter Raleigh's ghost. The ghost declared that such a work would serve to check the growth of unbelief in England and would also exculpate the famous knight himself from the charge of infidelity.

His most important treatises are:

1. Justice and Right;
2. Faith;
3. The Providence of God;
4. Immortality of the Soul;
5. Efficacious Grace, the Divine Decrees, Free Will, Conditional Foreknowledge of God;
6. The Predestination and the Reprobation of Angels and Men - the Predestination of Christ;
7. The Sovereign Good;
8. The Divine Perfections;
9. The Power of the Roman Pontiff;
10. What Faith and Religion should be embraced; (This treatise Saint Francis of Sales said was rather the work of the Angel of the Great Council than of Lessius. It brought back Prince John of Nassau and many other distinguished personages to the Church.)
11. Abstinence;
12. The Choice of a State of Life, and Celibacy;
13. The Names of God.

In the *Imago Primi Sæculi Societatis Jesu*, Lessius is described as follows: "His soul, greater than the world, was always turned towards God, so that on earth he seemed to lead the life of heaven. Taking but little nourishment and that only once a day, he was nevertheless constantly occupied in reading and writing on divine things. His countenance was resplendent with the light of sanctity."

He was particularly remarkable for his Christian patience. Though afflicted with bodily infirmities from his earliest youth, and suffering particularly in the four last years of his life, he never prayed for any alleviation of his pain. On the contrary he was continually thanking God for giving him a share of the cross. His only remedy was abstinence, and in that respect he was a source of astonishment to those who lived with him. His unusual intellectual powers which always seemed to be flooded with light enabled him to surmount his bodily suffering. Indeed it was while he was undergoing what amounted almost to martyrdom that he wrote his masterpieces. His friends regarded it as miraculous.

His writings reveal his soul, especially those on the Sovereign Good and the Divine Names. With Saint Denis and Saint Augustine he rises to the contemplation of the Divinity and speaks of God as if his heart were on fire.

He died at Louvain January 15, 1623 at the age of sixty-nine. In Belgium and elsewhere he was regarded as a saint. He was buried before the main altar of the church of the Society in the Rue de Namur next to the college where he had labored for thirty-nine years. Saint Michel, as it is called, is no longer a Jesuit church although it still bears on its facade and in the interior the emblems and statues of the saints of the Society. The present Jesuit establishment is in what used to be a somewhat mean street called the Rue des Recollets. Near the Scholasticate however in somewhat neighborly fashion is a dormitory erected by the University and named after the distinguished friend of Lessius, Justus Lipsius. Between the two buildings and in striking contrast, historically and otherwise, is the Tower of Jansenius where the *Augustinus* is said to have been written. Thirty-five years ago if memory serves us right there was a tradition in the Scholasticate, that the chair in the pulpit of the Professor of Dogma was the identical one used by Lessius in his time. Of course one may be skeptical on

that score, for such a fragile article of furniture could scarcely have survived the storms through which the Society has passed during the long period that intervened between then and now. Some years ago, the bones of the great man were carried over from the Rue de Namur to the Rue des Recollets and deposited in a marble tomb near the altar where the heart of Saint John Berchmans is enshrined. Of that relic at least, there can be no doubt.

Immediately after his death, an ecclesiastical tribunal was instituted for an official inquiry into his life and virtues, with view to his canonization. The testimony taken at the time was deposited in the archives of the Archbishopric of Malines, but for a long time the process was interrupted on account of political upheaval, and only in our times has it been resumed.

It is superfluous to say that the works of such a man must be of great value not only to priests and religious, but also to people of the world who are desirous of knowing more than the mere rudiments of their religion. They ought also to be especially serviceable both for the Directors of retreats and for those who follow the Exercises. Indeed there is every reason why "The Meditative Summaries" on account of their devotional character might be used very profitably for visits to the Blessed Sacrament or even while assisting at Holy Mass.

We have used the Latin text as well as the French translation of Bouix in preparing this English version. There was thus less danger of making the great man say what he never intended. The conciseness of his style contributed not a little to the difficulty of the task but we trust we have succeeded in making the translation coincide strictly with the meaning of the author. We commend the book in its new dress to the benignity of the reader.

God and the Divinity

Saint Denis tells us we can form an idea of God in two ways: affirmatively and negatively. The first is by positive concepts or by ascribing every possible perfection to God; the second by negative concepts, or by denying that any perfection conceivable by a created mind unilluminated by the light of glory can be properly predicated of Him.

If we follow the first method we say, for instance that He is a spirit, most sovereignly exalted, good, great, eternal, powerful, wise, sweet, holy, just, merciful, beautiful; intimately present in all creatures, creating them, forming them, conserving them, governing them, and ordaining them to His glory, which is the first beginning and last end of all created things.

Saint Augustine in his *Confessions* Book 1, chapter 4, has given us such a description while adding something that partakes to a certain degree of the second method. "God is a spirit," he says, "sovereign and sovereignly good, great, and sempiternal; most powerful and most benign, most merciful and most just, most hidden and omnipresent, most strong and most beautiful, most simple and most perfect, indivisible and immeasurable, stable and incomprehensible; changeless, yet changing all things; always in action, yet ever in repose, amassing yet lacking naught; creating, nourishing, perfecting, upholding, completing and protecting all things; the Being from whom are all things; by whom are all things, and for whom are all things."

Saint Bernard in his book *De Consideratione* addressed to Pope Eugenius, asks: "What is God?" "God," he answers, "is an all powerful will, a sweet force, eternal light, immutable reason, sovereign beatitude; creating the soul to make it participate in Himself; vivifying it, to make it feel its Creator; in touch with it to make it long to come to Him; dilating it to make it receive Him; justifying it to enable it to merit; inflaming it to set it on fire with zeal; fecundating it to make it fruitful; leading it to justice; forming it to benevolence; moulding it to wisdom; visiting it to console it; illuminating it to increase its vision guarding it for immortality; filling it to overflowing with felicity, encompassing it for salvation." Here as elsewhere, Saint

Bernard describes God by attributing to Him all perfections. He follows the affirmative method.

An example of the negative method would be to say that God is a spirit, infinite, immense, sempiternal, infinitely above all perfection, all excellence and all greatness conceivable by a created mind. He is above all substance, all power, all wisdom, all intelligence, all light, all beauty, all sanctity, all justice, all goodness, all beatitude, all glory, so that nothing of these things can be properly predicated of Him. He is like none of them, but is infinitely more sublime and excellent than them all.

The reason of this is that all perfections conceivable by us or by the angels unaided by the light of glory are limited. Moreover they are not included in each other; and besides all perfections conceived by a created intelligence are conceived as accidental forms, such as are in created beings; whereas in God they are a most simple substance or a self-subsisting form.

In many of his writings Saint Denis seems to prefer the negative to the affirmative method. Instances of it may be found in Chapter II of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Chapter I and II of *The Names of God*, and in Chapter III of *Mystic Theology*.

The two however, may be combined, as in the following description of the Divinity: "God is incomprehensible goodness in His essence, inscrutable depth in His wisdom, inaccessible height in His elevation; ineffable breadth in His love; infinite length in His eternity; superlative purity in His holiness; absolute immensity in His greatness, an obscurity most luminous, a solitude most peopled, and a simplicity most perfect. For Himself and for all the blessed He is paradise, heaven, eternal rest, eternal beatitude, and the infinite plenitude of all that is good."

Although in fact, as well as in the concept of those who have the vision of God, there is, in no way, any distinction between the Divinity and God, yet in our concept or in our manner of conceiving things, there is a distinction to be made. For we conceive the Divinity as the form, and God as the being resulting from form and substance.

We may conceive the Divinity in two ways: First as an infinite intellectual Essence or Nature from which flow in some way all those perfections which are called *attributes*. These attributes, however, are conceived not as formally contained in the Divinity or in the Divine Essence, but as being in the Divinity or Divine Essence as in their foundation. We conceive them as we do properties in created things.

Secondly, we may conceive the Divinity as a most simple self-subsisting form of infinite perfection, and containing formally all perfections in their highest degree, in such a way that God, by that form is formally powerful, wise, good, holy, just, etc.; nay is formally power itself, wisdom itself, goodness itself, holiness itself, justice itself; not accidental but substantial and self-subsistent. This manner of conceiving God is more elevated, more noble and more worthy of God as we have explained at length in Book 1, *De Perfect. divinis*, chapters 1 and 3.

Reason and the testimony of the Holy Fathers also show this; for conceived in this manner the Divine Essence contains formally all simple perfections, and is not considered merely as the basis or foundation of them. Moreover the perfections themselves are presented to us as substantial and not as accidental, or accessory things.

He Who Is

God is called *Being, He Who Is, Self-Existent*, in five ways or for five reasons.

First. Because He is the source and cause of all being; for all being comes from Him and depends on Him continually, as the light depends on the sun.

Second. Because His being is not limited. He is not this or that being, as an angel or a man is, but *He Is universally*. He comprises in Himself and anticipates every kind of being, from all eternity; for the whole plentitude, the whole latitude, and the whole amplitude of being is most fully and eminently contained in Him.

Third. Because *He Is eternally*, and because by His Being and by His life. He fills, equals, comprises and includes in Himself all eternity.

Fourth. Because *He Is limitlessly*, and fills the entire immensity of all imaginable space.

Fifth. Because *He Is immutably*, possessing everything simultaneously and securely in a way that He can never lose anything; for He possesses all things by His immutable Essence to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be withdrawn.

The Infinite God

God is *infinite* in His essence, not only in some kind of perfection, as power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, etc., but He is absolutely infinite in all kinds of perfection and consequently in the whole range of being.

First. As the fruitful *Cause* in which the whole amplitude of being eminently exists and which includes the infinite species of every genus; the infinite individuals of every species, and consequently whatever in the nature of being is conceivable by the intelligence of the angels and even by that of God.

That is why Saint Gregory, of Nazianzen, in his *Oratio in Natalia* calls God the *immense ocean of being*. In it there are infinite worlds, infinite species of angels, one excelling the other, on and on through infinity; infinite nations of peoples, infinite species of animals, infinite natures and varieties of plants, of minerals and precious stones. There is an infinity of gold and silver; there are infinite pearls of rarest size, and every description of precious stones. There are infinite species of colors, of paintings, of harmonies, of odors, of savors and delectable objects, of the flesh and the senses; infinite regions and cities, and fields and forests, and groves and gardens; infinite fountains and hills; infinite rivers and seas, infinite palaces and temples, infinite furnishings of every kind and of inestimable price. In it finally are contained an infinite abundance of all that the mind can conceive of precious and beautiful and splendid and delectable. All these things and an infinity of others that no created intellect can grasp, exist in the essence, wisdom, and omnipotence of God, and shine before His mind in such a manner that He can with a single sign of His will produce them outside of Himself in all conceivable multitudes and splendors.

Hence it follows that whoever possesses God possesses at the same time all those things and enjoys them in God in a most exalted manner.

Second. God is called *absolutely infinite*, because alone, by Himself He is infinitely more excellent, more grand, more beautiful, more lovable than all those infinite things which are contained eminently in His essence, His

wisdom, His power. And even if God were to make them pass from nothing into being. He would still be infinitely above them all. Nay all those things taken collectively and considered together, are but as nothing in comparison with the divine excellence. Hence he who possesses God, and rejoices in Him, enjoys by that possession alone a happiness incomparably greater than he would possess if outside of God he owned all that there is of beauty, splendor, glory and happiness. For God is all those things and infinitely more than all those things.

Third. From the fact that *God is infinite in His Essence*, it follows that He Himself is necessarily infinite in every kind of perfection that belongs to Him, namely, in greatness, power, wisdom, holiness, benignity, mercy, justice, beauty, etc. The reason is because such perfections can correspond to the Divine Essence only in an infinite perfection and degree; for they must be proportionate and equal to His Essence, from which, according to our manner of conceiving, they seem to flow. Secondly because these perfections are in God by a single and most simple form, which is absolutely infinite and unlimited. For they are not real properties proceeding from the Essence, but are the Divine self-subsisting Essence Itself, and consequently are a simple form of the Divinity which can be comprehended by us only imperfectly.

The God of Immensity

This name is given to the Almighty because of His greatness and for the want of a better word what we call His extension. He is extended and so to say, diffused everywhere; above, below, on the right, on the left, before and back of us. He is circumscribed by no limit and by no space. The mind contemplating this is lost in amazement. Were we to imagine an extent beyond the universe of a thousand leagues in every direction, God would still be there. Were we to add a million more, God would still be beyond them. Imagine it to extend as many millions of leagues as there are grains of sand on the shores of the sea, as drops of water in the ocean, or as there would be grains of dust to fill the whole universe, God is still by infinite millions of leagues beyond them all, and that most completely and perfectly, namely in the Three Persons, with all the perfections and the gifts and the riches which are eminently contained in Him.

Finally no human mind can conceive so vast an extent that God is not infinitely greater than it; and infinitely diffused without and beyond it; not merely in parts as the air and other material substances, but complete by Himself and if I may so speak in His *totalities*, as a spirit, so that He is entire in every point of all space; not, as it were, floating or mobile but most firmly and immovably and as the foundation of all things.

All the vastness of the universe compared to the magnitude and extension of God is like a little drop of water in comparison with the immensity of the ocean, or as a grain of dust in comparison with the vastness of the whole universe. Thus the Book of Wisdom (11:23) tells us: "The whole world before Thee is the least grain in the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew that falleth upon the earth." Or to speak more correctly there is no proportion between the magnitude and the extension of God and the magnitude and extension of the universe, for the magnitude of the extension of God not only infinitely exceeds the magnitude of the universe, but all magnitude conceivable by a created intelligence.

Nor does it matter that corporal and spiritual magnitudes admit of no comparison, for even if they cannot be compared in their nature they can be

compared by reason of their extension as theologians and philosophers generally admit when there is question of the soul and body, and of Angels, and the places adequate to them.

By reason of His immensity God is often called great in the Holy Scripture: "Of His greatness there is no end." (Psalm 47, 76, 88). But this name belongs to Him also by reason of His other attributes, for He is great in power, great in wisdom, great in holiness, great in majesty and great in all His perfections. Also when in the Holy Scriptures He is called absolutely great, we must understand that He is great, infinite, immense according to all the perfections which belong to Him as we read in the 47th Psalm which says: "Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountains"; that is to say. He is great in power, in wisdom, in holiness, in justice and mercy. And in Psalm 94 we are told to "praise the Lord, for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods." In the same way to be infinite, immense, eternal, unchangeable, immortal, incomprehensible, are things that belong to Him not merely by reason of His essence, but also according to all His attributes and personal prerogatives. This deserves our most serious consideration.

The Most Pure God

Simplicity is predicated of God, first, because in Him there are no parts either essential or accidental. He is not composed of body and soul like man, nor of matter and form like animals or plants, nor of integral parts as are all corporeal things, whether substances or accidents. There is in Him no compound of subject and accidental form, as in all created substances even angels, who nevertheless excel all other creatures in the simplicity of their nature. Nor is there any composition of mode and of things modified, as in all created things both substantial and accidental. For as they are all limited and imperfect they stand in need of divers modes which limit them intrinsically or unite them with other beings to help them to attain the perfection or state which is their due.

In fact all bodies and all accidental corporeal things in the world have a certain mode of extension, of density or tenuousness, of limitations according to their quantity or shape or the place they occupy in space. All spiritual substances and their accidental forms are defined and enclosed in a certain space beyond which they cannot extend and within which they can contract in an infinite variety of ways. All forms both substantial and accidental possess a certain mode of inhering to, uniting with, and informing the subject to which they belong. All subjects likewise are united with their forms and accidents, and all the parts of a continuous thing possess a certain mode of union with each other.

In the same way all the degrees of forms which increase or decrease in intensity enjoy a mutual union by means of a certain intimate and reciprocal penetration and cohesion.

According to these various modes numberless changes are daily being wrought which result in the subject presenting itself ceaselessly under different aspects.

Now God is incapable of all this, for the reason that He is absolutely without limitation, is supremely perfect in all respects and is infinitely

exalted above them all to such a degree that He can not be affected or touched by any created thing.

Second. God is called *simple* not only because He is exempt from anything compound in His nature, but still more so because He is infinitely pure, subtle and spiritual, and by His purity is infinitely above all that is corporeal or spiritual. For the more pure and spiritual a thing is the more simple it is. Hence just as the elements, as many think, have no component parts and in that respect are equally simple in their nature, yet when we examine their purity one is found to be more simple than the other; water more simple than earth, the heavens purer and simpler than the elements. Hence as the Divine Essence is of infinite sublimity and purity (for it is a Pure Act infinitely elevated in its character not only above all corporeal substances but above all spirits that are or can be created) it is to be rightfully regarded as infinitely simple, so that all the Angelic spirits compared to Him do not seem to be spirits at all but coarse natures, impure and concrete like bodies. By reason of this subtlety and simplicity God's essence can penetrate and pervade everything, be intimately present to them interiorly and unseen, creating, forming, preserving, perfecting and holding all creatures and cooperating with them all in a way that is absolutely hidden from observation.

By reason of this simplicity God is infinitely more perfect and more excellent than if he possessed all perfections in different forms, compounded and united with each other; for it is infinitely more perfect and more excellent and more sublime to possess all perfections by a single form than to possess them by different forms. For these different forms are really limited to their own species. Hence it follows that they could not constitute the Divinity or be the Deity itself. But that form which in its supreme simplicity contains all perfections, is necessarily limitless and infinite. It is Being by itself, *a se*, and consequently is the Divinity itself.

The Eternal God

God is called Eternal because He existed an infinity of ages before all imaginable time, and because He will exist an infinity of ages after all imaginable time.

Let us go back in thought before the creation of the world as many myriads of ages, (and by ages I mean centuries) as there are grains of sand on every shore of every sea, as there are drops in all the seas and lakes and rivers of the earth, as there are leaves on all its trees and blades of grass in all its meadows, or seeds in all its fields, or hairs on the furs of all the animals of the world, and to this inconceivable number let us add as many millions of ages as would be represented by grains of dust that would be necessary to fill the universe, and although such an inconceivable lapse of time would itself seem an eternity yet God would have preceded it by millions of ages.

Let us go still further. Let an angel with all his intellectual power multiply all this vast number of ages, going ever higher and higher by squaring and cubing these numbers and keep on combining them for thousands of years, at infinite distances and infinite ages from each other: God would still be prior to and older than them all. The same must be said even if all these multiplications and squarings and cubings constantly mounted upwards in a straight line as many times as there would be grains of dust enough to fill the universe. But no number of years or centuries can be conceived by a created mind as going backward into the past without having some term from which they start, yet prior to that term there were infinite ages in which God preceded it. Hence He is called the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7) and The First and The Last (Apocalypse 1).

In the same way are we to conceive the eternity of the future. Imagine in the future as many millions of ages as we have just now assigned. When they are all completed, there will still be millions of ages to come and infinite ages in which God will reign with His saints and in which the reprobate will suffer in hell. No created mind can conceive so great an extent of time which would not when it is over suppose an infinite multitude of ages to follow after.

Here it must be remembered that the whole of eternity, in as much as it expresses a certain extent of duration, is, in our manner of conceiving it, composed of two parts, although of itself it is one and indivisible. We conceive one of these parts as existing prior to all imaginable time: as being always past. That belongs to God alone, and in my opinion could not belong to any creature, as we have proved elsewhere from the Fathers (Lib. iv de Perf. Div., c. 2). The other part is conceived as existing after all imaginable ages, as always future, and in such a way that we can take nothing from it to diminish it. That future can be communicated to creatures, for it is thus that the renovated world, the beatitude of the saints and the torments of the reprobate will be eternal.

Second. God is called *eternal* not only because before all conceivable time He has existed for infinite ages and because after all conceivable time He will continue to exist for infinite ages, but still more because He possesses in a most perfect manner both simultaneously and collectively all good, all power, all wisdom, all beatitude, all joy and delight that could be acquired during an infinite period, and He possesses them immutably from all eternity and for all eternity, without any beginning and without any end, and in such a way that nothing can be added and nothing taken away. No one in this world could possess collectively all the honors and all the happiness which he is capable of enjoying in the whole course of his life in a way to feel, perceive and enjoy them simultaneously. Nor could he support them all at the same time. He would die with excess of joy, for his heart would break. Examples of death from too much joy are not rare. But God possesses all the joys which He can receive from infinite possessions for an infinite period simultaneously and collectively for all eternity.

Hence the joy of God is infinite in three ways. First, because its object is an infinite good, namely the excellency of His Being. Over and above that, it has for its object the infinite goods that are eminently contained in the Divine Essence. Secondly, because He possesses simultaneously and collectively all the joy that He could receive successively during an infinite period. Thirdly, because He possesses all this, not for a limited time but during all eternity.

It is as if there were a material light infinite in intensity and extent, capable of having all the perfection that would be expended at every instant of its duration, all concentrated on one single point, and yet although thus concentrated, would be diffused through vast spaces and be everywhere in all its entirety and in all its perfection.

In the same way, God from all eternity simultaneously and immutably conceives and retains all His thoughts, all His counsels, all His decrees in such a way that nothing new can come to Him. He cannot think or wish or decree what He has not already thought and wished and decreed from all eternity, because for all things and for each in particular, an eternal decree must have preceded, and without such a decree nothing can be done in time. This does not mean that absolutely speaking, God could not have made other things than those He has made, or is to make. Far from us be such a thought; for He has the power to make others without end, although in reality He has not decreed to make them. Nevertheless it is impossible that in reality He should make anything which He has not from all eternity decreed to make. Therefore He can absolutely do all things, if we consider His power, wisdom and sovereign liberty to formulate from all eternity such decrees as it pleases Him to do but He cannot do all things, in the hypothesis or the supposition that there had not been on His part an antecedent decree. It belongs to the eminent perfection of His eternity and to the immutability of His eternal grandeur to have considered, examined and weighed in His infinite light all possible things, both those which will be done in time and those which will not be done; all as exactly and as perfectly as if He had weighed and considered each in particular during an infinite period. Hence there is no reason why He could not decree simultaneously and at one time with regard to all things and to each in particular, determining what should be done or permitted at some infinite period afterwards. Indeed that is necessary in order that His will with regard to certain objects should not, so to speak, be held in suspense. That would be an imperfection.

Hence there is no succession of acts or of understanding or of will in God. What He thinks and sees. He thinks and sees always. Whom He loves once, He loves always, but He loves him for that time in which he is loveable, namely as long as he is in a state of grace. Whom He hates once He hates

always, not however absolutely, but only for the time that such a one is worthy of hatred; for when the reason for hatred is removed the person becomes an object of love. These acts which according to our manner of conceiving them exist in God from all eternity do not properly speaking cease to be; nor do they spring up again, nor are they formed anew, but they remain invariable with regard to their object according as it is considered for a certain time and in a certain state, and they are not called absolute except in such time as the objects exist in a certain state, and for the time during which they will exist or have existed in that state.

Third. God is called *Eternal*, for the reason that He is above eternity, and is the cause of eternity in creatures. For through that omnipotent, continual and unchangeable influence He creates and preserves all things. He is the cause of the continuance in existence of the world, the angels and men, and He is the cause of the state of glory and the state of damnation. Finally all things have received from Him their duration, their limit of age, their span of existence, their length of life, their time of birth, their time of death, each according to its nature and condition.

The Most High God

God is called *the Most High* because He is the cause of all sublimity or elevation in creatures, whether it be of local altitude as when we speak of the high heavens, or official prominence like that of kings and princes or prelates; or superiority of nature such as the angels possess over corporeal substances, or the perfection of state like that of the elect, of the Blessed Virgin, or of the Sacred Humanity of Christ. It is God who regulates, adjusts, and bestows all this exaltedness and superiority. He arranges in exquisite order all the visible and invisible parts of the universe.

Second. He is called *The Most High* because He alone is really sublime and exalted, for all elevation or sublimity in created things is, when compared to His, no elevation at all, but only an image and a shadow of it. In effect all the kings and princes of the world, and all the angels and blessed are, of their very nature. His servants and slaves; even if by His love and the communication of His Spirit He has adopted them and calls them His children.

Third. God is justly called *The Most High*, because by His Essence and all His perfections, He is infinitely above all creatures, not only those that actually exist, but those that are possible or conceivable, no matter how exalted, or mighty, or wise, or great, or beautiful, or happy they may be imagined to be. Hence it follows that God is called *The Most High* not only because He is above all creatures, but because He is *infinitely* above them; in such a manner that between the most exalted creature existing, and God, there are infinite grades of angelic species rising higher and higher towards Him. The same must be said of the degrees of beatitude. Hence every creature no matter how exalted, is, if I may say so, placed at an infinite distance beneath Him, although in the same space. Hence between the creature and God Himself there is an infinite distance; not of place but of nature or degree. The mystics call this the *Solitude of God*.

The Immutable God

God is called *Immutable*, first, because all permanency and all immutability in created things is derived from Him. It is He who will keep forever this whole universe in its place and in the state of glory which the divine power will invest it with after the universal judgment. In the same way He will keep the angels and men in their state of glory or their state of damnation.

Second. God is called Immutable, because in Him there cannot be the slightest diminution or increase; neither in His substance, nor power, nor perfection, nor understanding, nor will, nor place, nor situation, nor in any mode of being whatsoever. If all men and all angels and the entire universe and all created things should perish He would lose nothing in Himself. The plenitude of His joy and of His felicity and the affluence of every good would be always the same in Him. For He holds all things ever present in the light of His supreme wisdom and in the omnipotence of His might. Nor can there be any change in His manner of possessing them, nor can any creature evade His control. At the least sign on His part all things would exist anew in their respective natures and serve Him as before. Hence it follows, that the destruction of all things would cause Him no loss. As the Royal Prophet says: "When the wicked shall spring up as grass, and all the workers of iniquity shall appear, that they may perish for ever and ever, but Thou, O Lord, art most high forever more." (Psalm 91)

The reason of this immutability of God is that all He has or can have, He has actually by His Essence. Hence there can be in Him no diminution or increase, unless that Essence should in some manner vary. But it admits no change, for it is infinitely exalted above all that is subject to change.

The Immortal God

God is called *Immortal*, first, because being a simple substance which is self-subsisting, He cannot in any manner perish by dissolution, as man who ceases to live when his soul is separated from his body. Nevertheless this immortality is common to God and to all self-subsisting simple substances. Because they are simple, they cannot perish by a division into the parts of their nature, and being self-subsistent they do not depend on any subject whose death or alteration must cause them to perish; as happens for instance with the souls or lives of animals and plants, when the body is destroyed. Being separated from their subjects they cannot perform any function and consequently conservation is not due them.

God is properly called *Immortal* because He is by His nature, such that He cannot in any manner cease to be, whereas all other beings without exception are so constituted that they can lose their life, their nature and all that they are. Hence in the epistle to Timothy, Saint Paul says in speaking of God: "*He alone has immortality.*"

The reason is that God being the First and Supreme Being, and the foundation of all beings can in no manner be dependent on any other being whatever, and consequently He cannot cease to be, or lose His existence by the withdrawal of the influence or the support of any cause.

Hence God is, by His nature, absolutely and in every way immortal. But all creatures, even the angels and the blessed whose nature and life seem to be especially immortal, depend by their nature on the continual influence of God, by whom they were created, formed and preserved with all their natural or beatified life; and they are by the condition of their nature such, that they may lose both of these lives and cease to be, if it so happened that God who of His free will preserves them, withdraws his concurrence.

Thus although the scholastic philosophers and theologians teach that the angels are absolutely immortal in their nature, because they have nothing in them that can cause their extinction, and because no created thing can make them perish, for their natures are simple, they are nevertheless said by the

Holy Fathers to be, of their nature, mortal, and only by the goodness and grace of God, immortal. However by grace is meant in this instance, a free and gratuitous influence of God, by which He preserves their nature; and as this grace is a preservative of their nature it was not called supernatural but natural. It was gratuitous because it did not come from the merits of the recipients but was purely a gift like creation. Hence the angels when compared to other creatures in general are called immortal; but when compared to God they are sometimes described as mortal.

Third. God is called *Immortal* because He is absolutely unchangeable. Not only He cannot lose His existence but cannot lose anything that is in Him. Nothing can be taken from His majesty, nor from His greatness, nor glory, nor beatitude, nor wisdom, nor peace, nor tranquillity, nor from the superabundance of whatever good He possesses. Nor can His counsels or decrees be changed. For any change whatever would imply that He had ceased to be immortal in everything. The reason is that, in every change in which something is lost, there intervenes a sort of death with regard to that particular thing which is taken away.

The Invisible God

The Apostle joins the *Invisibility* of God to his Immortality when he says: "Now to the King of ages immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

God is called *Invisible*, first, because He cannot be seen as He is in Himself, by the eyes of the body; for what is altogether spiritual cannot be the object of bodily sight.

Second. God is called *Invisible* because no created intellect, by its own natural light, can see Him clearly as He is in Himself; nor is there any possible intelligence which could see Him by its natural powers. Thus He is invisible to all creatures and can be seen and known only by Himself. It is in this sense that the Apostle calls God *Invisible*.

Third. He is called *Invisible* because although in some manner He may be seen clearly by a created spirit aided by the light of glory. He cannot be seen comprehensively, namely in such a way that nothing escapes the one who sees. For every vision of the blessed is infinitely removed from the comprehensive vision of God, and God transcends infinitely all that they can see. In that sense some of the Fathers say that God is invisible and unknown to all creatures, and that He alone can see and know Himself as He is.

The Incomprehensible God

God is called *Incomprehensible* for four reasons: First, He is *Incomprehensible to the understanding*, because no creature even with the light of glory, no matter how great the illumination may be, can comprehend Him; that is to say, can know Him in such a way that nothing escapes the one who contemplates or knows Him. For there will always remain an infinity of things which will not be distinctly known or conceived. There will be an infinite number of conceptions of things, there will be an infinity of complacencies in possible things, an infinity of decrees, especially of conditioned decrees and an infinity of modes in which the Divine Essence is imitable. And even if a created spirit should see all those things distinctly in God by means of some elevated degree of glory, such as that which is in the soul of Christ (a thing however which is absolutely impossible), nevertheless God would not be properly and perfectly known by that spirit, because such knowledge would not in its clearness equal the Divine Essence and would never succeed in knowing God as perfectly and as clearly as He can be known. It would remain infinitely below that requisite clearness for the reason that it is essentially finite. Hence it follows that such knowledge would not be equal to God's and could never perfectly comprehend Him. It would comprehend Him only in part, that is to say, according to the multitude of objects known and not according to the clearness and perfection of knowledge.

God is also *Incomprehensible to the understanding*, in this sense, that no created understanding, no matter how exalted, can by the powers of its nature attain to Him in such a manner as to see Him clearly and know Him as He is. Let thought soar as high as it may, it will be always infinitely removed from the clear knowledge of God's Being.

Second. God is *Incomprehensible to the will and to the heart*, because no spirit can love, honor, esteem, praise or revere Him as much as He deserves. He is infinitely above all the love, honor, esteem, praise and reverence that any and every creature might pay Him, even of all the blessed taken collectively, (Sirach 43:30, et seq.)

Third. He is *Incomprehensible relatively to space*, because being Immense He cannot be confined to any space no matter how vast.

Fourth. He is *Incomprehensible with regard to time*, because being Eternal, He is before all conceivable duration, He precedes it by an infinity of ages, and there still remains an infinity of ages after any duration that the mind can conceive.

The Ineffable God

God is called *Ineffable*, first, because there is no word nor speech that can describe Him as He is in Himself, even if one should write as many books as would fill the whole world.

Second. Because not only is it impossible to speak of Him by words of the lips, but no created spirit can without the light of glory conceive Him such as He is, and hence cannot represent Him even by mental words. For every conception by which a created spirit can represent God to itself without the help of the light of glory, is infinitely removed from the truth. Hence it follows that a single word by which the blessed represent and express God in their mind, is infinitely superior to all the wisdom of men and angels. Thus God is not ineffable to the blessed, but He is to men and angels outside of the state of beatitude.

Third. God is called *Ineffable*, because He is so sublime, infinite and immense, that even with the light of glory, the blessed cannot by any mental word represent Him to themselves or speak of Him in an adequate and comprehensive manner. That belongs to Him alone. In that way He is ineffable even to the blessed.

The Almighty God

God is called Omnipotent or Almighty, first, in as much as He is the *Cause* from which are all power, all virtue, all energy, all vigor and all efficiency in the whole of creation: on the earth, in the sea, in the stars, in the stones, in the metals, in the plants, in the minerals, in man and in angels. All power to do anything be it ever so insignificant is but a slight participation in the power of God.

Second. God is *formally Omnipotent* because He possesses infinite power; or rather He is infinite self-subsisting power itself. He can do all things that a created spirit can conceive; and such things are infinite in their genus and species. For instance one can conceive infinite worlds like ours, and others unlike it; an infinity of angels, an infinity of peoples, an infinity of metals, gold, silver etc., an infinity of precious stones and so on.

When we say that God can make an infinite number of things we must understand it in this sense, viz: that whatever may be the number of things of every kind that He has created, He can still create others without end; so that no created mind can conceive a number of things so great that God can not make as many more, endlessly. However He could not create things that would be actually infinite. Such is the more probable opinion of Saint Thomas and of many others. For a creature cannot be actually infinite as we have elsewhere demonstrated.

Moreover God can not only do what no created mind can conceive, and He can do so in any number, quantity and perfection whatever, but He can also do whatever His infinite wisdom can conceive, either outside or within Himself, and such things would be infinitely greater and more marvellous than anything a created mind could conceive. For all things that His infinite mind can conceive or form interiorly by knowing, He can produce and form outside of Himself. In that way His power equals His wisdom.

Third. He is called Almighty because He can make all things instantly, without delay, without effort, with supreme and infinite facility, by a single sign of His will, by a single word. It would be incomparably more easy for

Him to create a thousand new worlds than for us to pronounce the word "world"; and could there be anything easier than that?

Fourth. He is called Almighty or rather "He who holdeth all things"; because He holds in His hand all things, and each in particular in its innermost nature. He binds them in their unity lest they should dissolve and fade away. He is the basis and foundation that holds, sustains and conserves. For He is the root of all things, from which all being springs with an ineffable fecundity. He is the bond, the link of all things, holding them together in their several unities lest they dissolve and disappear. He is the basis and foundation of all, sustaining them and preventing them from falling back into their own nothingness.

The Most Wise God

God is called *Wise* and *Wisdom* for the reason, first, that He is the cause of all wisdom, and all knowledge whether little or great in the blessed, in the angels, in man and even in the animals; for from His wisdom everything emanates, down to that slight amount of knowledge which the instinct in animals reveals.

Second. God is called *formally Wise*, not because He is endowed and imbued with wisdom as the angels are, but because He is self-subsisting Wisdom in which is eminently contained the plenitude of all wisdom. By that *Wisdom*, from the first moment of its activity, if one may so speak, He comprehends with infinite clarity His own Essence, the procession of Persons in the most Holy Trinity, as well as the Persons themselves. Then, in the second instant, from all eternity and through all eternity. He directs His gaze with infinite clearness on all things possible, doing so by the power of the knowledge of His own Essence. In the third instant, His gaze embraces all that can be done by any created or creatable power. In the fourth instant, He looks out upon all that might be done in every possible hypothesis, namely on what are called *conditional futures*, and they are infinitely infinite, for the circumstances of each of the things that depend on free will may vary infinitely, and each of these things may be done in an infinite variety of ways. In the fifth instant. He sees in an absolute manner all future things during all eternity with all their attendant circumstances.

Third. God is called *Wise*, because He is so in a very special and eminent way which cannot be communicated to any creature. For as two things are necessary for wisdom, viz: the light to know and the object known. He has of Himself both one and the other in an eminent degree, and in infinite perfection. In effect, He is Himself the infinite self-subsisting light of intelligence, and He is Himself and by Himself every intelligible object, or contains it in Himself eminently. He does not need to borrow from any one either the light of intelligence or the object which is understood by the intelligence.

The Beautiful God

God is called *Beautiful*, first, because He is the source of all beauty of the angels and men; of the heavens, the elements, the animals, plants, pearls, precious stones and all other created things. All their beauty and attractiveness, both internal and external, that which appeals to the senses as well as that which delights the intelligence have been received by them, through Him and from His wisdom.

There are seven degrees of beauty. The first is the external beauty that we see with our eyes, in the flowers or precious stones, in the appearance or form of animals, and of men and women; in the stars, the sun and the moon. This is the beauty that mortals admire so much and which exercises such a fascination on them and prompts them to pursue it.

The second degree is the interior beauty of those forms from which exterior beauty proceeds. This interior beauty is incomparably greater and more admirable because in a simple form and in a simple power there is contained in an ineffable manner all the variety which appears externally in the flowers, in the plants, in the structure of animals, in colors and figures and in all other things. Thus in the virtue of the seed is contained the whole structure, the figures and the colors of plants, animals, etc.

The third degree of beauty is found in the lives of animals or in what are called sentient souls. In that simple form is contained the power of the senses, the power of the imagination and the power of the sensitive appetite. All these things are so admirable that the human soul cannot comprehend the hundredth part of them. The sensitive or sentient soul is so far above the vegetative that there is more beauty in one single sentient soul than in all vegetative souls together.

The fourth degree of beauty is that of the rational soul which is incomparably more beautiful than all sentient souls taken together.

The fifth degree is in the angelic nature which is incomparably more beautiful than the rational soul.

The sixth degree is that of the inhabitants of heaven whose beauty surpasses that of the whole universe, even if that beauty were all united in its entirety under one form.

The seventh degree is that of the Divine beauty in which all the natural and supernatural, all the spiritual and corporeal beauty of all created or creatable beings is most eminently and most unitedly contained. All of this, however, is as nothing in comparison with the beauty of God. For that reason, the sight of the divine beauty will ravish and transport the inhabitants of heaven incomparably more than the sight of the glory of the saints, of the whole celestial court and of all the universe, although they also must be a source of inconceivable delight.

Second. God is called *Beautiful*, because He is Himself formally infinite Beauty surpassing infinitely all created or creatable beauty, and everything else that the divine intelligence could conceive outside of itself. It follows from this, that He is infinitely lovable, an infinite source of delight, and has an infinite power of drawing the spirit to love Him; and although in reality He does not attract infinitely the spirits of the blessed, because their vision has not an infinite perfection, yet He attracts them with such a power that they all, of necessity love Him, and cannot in any manner suspend or arrest their love; and the greater the necessity of loving God there is in the inhabitants of heaven, the greater is their happiness.

The Good God

God is called *Good*, first, because He is the source of all good. From Him comes all that men and angels and the whole universe possess in the realms of nature, grace, and glory; and all created good is but a slight participation, a little spark of the Infinite Good. He is the author of every essential perfection that makes a thing be called good in itself, and also of every proportion and congruity that renders a thing good for that to which it is adapted.

Second. God is called *Good formally*, because in Him is the plenitude of every good that a created spirit can conceive, so that no one can imagine any good or any perfection which is not contained in Him in a supreme degree and in infinite excess.

In Him there is an infinite light, an infinite power, an infinite wisdom, an infinite beauty, an infinite sweetness, an infinite joy, an infinite glory, an infinite beatitude, an infinite holiness, an infinite justice, and an infinite mercy. More than that. He is Himself all these. things in the most simple and sublime manner by His absolutely simple Essence.

Third. God is called The Supreme Good, because He is so transcendently good that He is infinitely above all good that a created mind can conceive, and yet He is like to none of these things, so that all conceivable goodness should be rather denied than affirmed of Him.

The Holy God

God is called *Holy*, first, as the cause and source of all holiness that can be found in men and angels; for all holiness comes from Him as from an infinite fountain of purity and holiness.

Second. He is called *Holy*, in as much as He is the object and measure of all holiness. As He is Himself infinite purity, and as He is infinitely spiritual, the more we approach Him by knowledge and love, the more we advance in holiness; for, to know and love Him and to cleave to Him by sincerest love is that genuine, formal or essential holiness by which every spirit is formally sanctified and is called holy.

Third. He is called *Holy*, not only in as much as He is the object of all holiness or, in other words, *objective* holiness, but still more because He is formally holy or is *formal* holiness. For as true holiness consists in the knowledge, love and enjoyment of God, and as He knows Himself infinitely, and loves Himself infinitely, it is clear that His holiness is infinite, and that He is infinitely holy. Nay more, He is Himself infinite holiness because He is the infinite knowledge, love and enjoyment of Himself.

Fourth. He is called *Holy* because all that belongs to the essence of holiness, He has of Himself, and with an infinite perfection. Two things are required for holiness; love and the object, or the purity of the object. Now God possesses both by Himself. He is the infinite love of Himself. He is the object of infinite purity in that love in which formal sanctity consists. He is thus infinite holiness, both formal and objective and He is by His Essence, the *measure of all holiness*; of His own, of that of the angels, and of men. He is by the love of Himself formally holy; He is holiness itself and is the source of holiness.

The Merciful God

God is called *Merciful*, first, because He is the source of all mercy and of every merciful prompting in men and angels.

Second. Because in so far as depends on Him, He is ready to save the whole human race which had lapsed from eternal salvation into eternal misery. He is ready not only to free it from that misery but to restore it to eternal happiness. For that He has paid a price more than sufficient, and besides He has, in effect, delivered from eternal misery an infinite multitude of souls whom He has enabled to attain to the enjoyment of the infinite and eternal good.

Third. Nor has He done this in an easy manner, as when He created the world or when He conferred beatitude on the angelic nature, but at the cost of labors, pains and immense sacrifices, humbling Himself by assuming the baseness and infirmity of human nature; embracing poverty and want, and countless miseries and afflictions, anguish and toil; submitting to shameful outrages, buffets and scourgings; permitting Himself to be spat upon, and accepting the cross, and the crudest kind of death; and finally delivering Himself up to us under the species of bread and wine in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. All that He has done out of His infinite mercy to lift us out of infinite evil and raise us up to infinite good.

The Just God

God is called *Just*, first, because He is the source and cause of all justice; for all the justice, all the rectitude, and all the holiness of angels and of men emanates from Him as a feeble ray and as an image of that Justice which towers infinitely above all created justice.

Second. God is *Just formally*, for as supreme justice consists in the love of God, which makes us conformable in the highest degree to the eternal law, and as God is the most perfect and sublime love of Himself, it follows necessarily that He is *Formal Justice*, most sublime and most complete. He is infinitely perfect Justice and infinitely above all the justice of the blessed.

Third. God is called *Just objectively*, because he is the *object* of all justice and of all rectitude. To love Him is the highest justice; and although we give the name of justice to that virtue which accords to every one his due, yet that is only human and political justice, and is the lowest in the scale of justice. What we refer to now is that supreme justice by which a man is formally just before God. It is the same as that by which God is just; and consists in the love of God and in a supreme conformity with the eternal law. In that kind of justice, human justice is eminently contained.

Fourth. God is called *Just as legislator and judge*, because He loves justice and hates injustice, in the greatest possible degree. That is to say He abhors those acts that are in opposition to the divine law and the divine majesty, and forbids them under pain of eternal damnation.

Finally God will establish and build on an everlasting foundation that order which the demons and men have violated. He will restore and rehabilitate it by rendering to all men according to their works on the day when He shall come to judge the world.

The Benign God

Benignity is that attribute of God which the Greek text of the Bible expresses by the word *chrestos* and the Vulgate by the word *suavis* as we see in Psalms 33, 85, 108 and elsewhere.

It is attributed to God because of His infinite tendency to bestow limitless and eternal good. It is that benignity which prompted Him to create angels and men; to form them to His image so as to give them a share in His divinity and glory.

Second. His *Benignity* in our regard manifested itself especially after the ruin caused by sin. Far from rejecting us when we were lost, He showed a greater sweetness in our regard, by sending us His Son, in order that being incarnate and visible among us He might converse with us and thereby lift us out of our sins, show us the way of salvation, give us an example of how to live, satisfy the Divine Justice, redeem us by His passion and death, wash us in His Blood, sanctify us by His Spirit and make us children of God. Over and above all this, He furnishes us with the means of salvation. He gave us those powerful helps, which are of a sensible and external character and are so wonderfully adapted to our nature.

Third. He gave us moreover, another ravishing manifestation of His Benignity. Before He ascended into heaven He delivered Himself entirely to us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in order to be for us always by His presence a source of consolation in our exile. He made it possible for us to offer it as a *sacrifice* so as to appease God's justice; and by receiving it as a *sacrament* to make us share in His divinity.

Finally, the *Benignity* of God shows itself in His dealings with sinners. He not only bears with them patiently, and refrains from punishing them though they repeatedly relapse into sin, but He calls them back when they wander away; He invites them to repentance, and is ever ready to restore them to grace whenever they wish to return. And when they do return, they are not received with harshness nor reproached for their ingratitude, but are

greeted with kindness and tenderness as children who are infinitely dear to Him and He reinstates them in their former position of children of God.

As the climax of His *Benignity* He demands nothing of us above our strength, but only what is easy and acceptable to a well balanced mind. He assures us: "My yoke is sweet and my burden is light."

The Patient God

God shows His *Patience* and His *Longanimity* in the most admirable manner. For although His majesty and power are infinite; and although everything takes place in His presence and before His eyes, yet He bears with everything patiently and long withholds His vengeance. He does so lest we should be hurled to eternal death. He even suffers infinite ingratitude and submits to an infinity of outrages with which mortals requite His countless benefits. He bears with idolatry, blasphemy, insults, rage, hate, perfidy, perjury, sacrileges, conspiracies with his enemies, contempt of religion, contempt of the commandments, contempt of the Passion of Jesus Christ, contempt of all His benefits, and contempt of all the heavenly blessings He has promised. He has all that constantly before His eyes and yet He submits to it all with patience.

Now it must be remembered that the gravity of an offense increases in proportion as the majesty and power of the one who is offended is more exalted, his presence more august, and the benefits which he has conferred more extraordinary. But as the majesty and power of God are infinite, as the benefits He has bestowed are of an infinite value, and as all this evil has been done in the infinite light of His countenance, it follows evidently that outrages against Him assume a certain character of infinite malice, and that His patience is infinite in tolerating them.

God is moreover called *Patient* because He bears with these injuries not only twice or thrice, or four, or five, or ten times, which no earthly prince would do, but a hundred times, nay a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand times. Surely there is nothing to be compared to it and it surpasses the power of men or angels to fathom its mystery.

Not only does God restrain His avenging hand, but with the greatest sweetness restrains the angels and the demons who are eager to use their power against us to cast us into hell. Saint Matthew teaches us this in the parable where the master forbids his servants to pluck out the cockle lest they might at the same time pluck out the wheat along with it. He bade

them let both grow until the harvest, that is to say till the Day of Judgment.
(Matthew 13)

Not only does God tolerate all this iniquity and withhold His vengeance, but He continues to pour out His blessings with an astounding profusion "making His sun to shine on the good and the wicked and His rain to fall on the just and the unjust."

Moreover He is prodigal in bestowing riches and honors and pleasure on His sworn enemies. He even gives them kingdoms and empires, the glory of the world, health, beauty, and long life; in brief, whatever men esteem most on earth. We should remember that there are two kinds of patience. One shows itself in suffering sorrow and pain and the afflictions and discomforts incident to this life. This is the patience that shines with especial brilliancy in the martyrs and in most of the saints. The other kind consists in supporting outrages, injuries, contempt. That is the only kind in God and in Him it is infinite. If we wish to be His children we should imitate Him in this respect. But both kinds were practiced in the most eminent degree by Jesus Christ, and that is why we should imitate Him both in the one and the other.

The God of Clemency

God is called Clement because of His exceedingly great kindness towards sinners.

First. As a judge full of meekness, He readily diminishes the punishment due to sin; for even in the other life, the penalties are less than the offenses deserve, and God might justly punish the reprobate with much greater torments than those they suffer. In this life a single sigh of genuine sorrow is sufficient to make Him remit the eternal punishment due to sin and commute it to a temporal one, which is accepted as satisfactory, though it is slight and brief. Moreover He has deigned to make it possible for us, to buy ourselves off even from this temporal punishment by many very easy means.

Second. His clemency is resplendent also in the facility with which He pardons all the injuries committed against Him, even if they are infinite in number, and in some respect infinite in their atrocity. For there are no sins so great, either in multitude or enormity, that He is not ready to pardon and to forget utterly if we repent of them from the bottom of our heart, and ask His forgiveness. Not only will He do that once, or twice, or ten times, or a hundred times, but thousands and tens of thousands of times.

Not merely is He ready to pardon us, but to adopt us as His children, and to admit us into a participation of His glory. Hence though He has abased His majesty in a manner that is amazing. He calls in a thousand ways to those who flee from Him; nay He entreats even His greatest enemies, promising to pardon them whenever they wish to return. He wishes to remove from above their heads the everlasting curse which is impending and to adopt them as His children and make them participators in His glory.

Finally His most sweet clemency appears chiefly in that He has sent us His Son to teach us and to call us back to Him by penance and a holy life, in order that we may escape the pains of hell and obtain eternal life and the communion of His glory.

The God of Sweetness

God is called Sweet, first, because He is the source of all sweetness whether corporeal or spiritual; for all that there is of sweet or suave, or lovable or delectable in created things comes from Him, and is a slight participation in His sweetness which knows no bounds.

Second. Because not only every sweet and delectable object is from Him, but also because every feeling of sweetness in men and angels is from Him; for He has made and formed in them the faculty which renders them capable of that pleasure. He has likewise made every delectable object and every fitness and adaptableness which an object has to the faculty of the soul with which it cooperates in the perception of that object's sweetness. Thus He is the cause of all delight.

Third. Because He is the eternal and infinite sweetness of all the heavenly spirits and of all the souls of the blessed. He is such, both as object and as cause. As object because it is in the enjoyment of God and the tasting of His sweetness that they feel themselves inundated with the greatest joy; as *cause*, for it is He who is the author not only of the light of glory by which the angels and the blessed see God clearly, but He is the author also of the habit of charity by which we love God above all things. From this follow that pleasure and boundless joy which they feel in the good things of God, that is to say, in the blessed tasting of His immeasurable sweetness.

Fourth. Because He is infinite sweetness both *objectively* and *formally*. *Objectively* because He is Himself the object of infinite sweetness. In Him everything sweet and delectable is supereminently contained. *Formally* because in beholding Himself comprehensively or according to all that He is. He derives from Himself infinite joy and infinite delight. Moreover He is Himself infinite love and from Himself conceives, so to speak, infinite joy.

To Jesus is given the name *Dulcedo Cordium*; the sweetness of hearts. The expression is Saint Bernard's, and is most appropriate, for it is Christ who by the bitterness of His Passion, delivered us from eternal damnation and transferred us to the eternal sweetness of heaven.

The True God

God is called *True*, *Truth* and *The First Truth* in four different ways.

First. In His *Essence* or *objectively*; because He is the first object of the intellect. In Him all intelligible objects and all objective truth are eminently contained. From Him every creature has received the truth of his being and possesses the privilege of being truly such according to the species and degree of its essence; of being called with truth such a creature and no other. Thus, for example, we can say this is truly a man, this is truly a lion, this is truly gold, and so on for all other creatures. Hence the truth of all things descends from the First Truth which is the truth of the Divine Essence.

Moreover the objective truth of things and especially of those that already exist consists in the conformity of their nature with the divine idea, in accordance with which and by which they have been made. But if we consider them according to their possible nature, by abstracting from their being or non-being, then their objective truth will consist in their conformity with the Divine Essence, in as much as the Divine Essence is imitable or can admit of being participated in. For it is thence as from the original idea of all things that arises the nature of the possibles, as I have elsewhere shown.

Second. God is called the *First Truth in Knowledge*. He is the Truth because He is the most true, certain, clear and exalted conception of Himself. He is moreover the First Truth because from Him descends all knowledge in men and angels and even in animals, which have the last and lowest participation in that knowledge. By His wisdom and knowledge God has formed in creatures all their power of knowing and He has determined the degree of knowledge which they should enjoy. He also lends them His concurrence so that according to their degree they participate in real knowledge.

Third. God is called the *First Truth in Speech*. He is the *Faithful Witness* because as He is Himself His own knowledge. His own love, His own charity, so is He His own Truth. Moreover the virtue of truthfulness in men

and angels which always prompts their will to utter the truth and avoid falsehood, is in God the Divine Will or Essence, which by its nature has an infinite propensity to what is true and an infinite horror of what is false.

God is called the *First and Highest Truth* or *Veracity* because the virtue of truthfulness or veracity in men and angels is a slight participation in His infinite truth. Hence His truthfulness is the first and highest rule of belief. On it ultimately our faith is based. We believe the Church, because it is governed and taught by the Holy Ghost or God Himself; but we believe in God because He is the First Truth. We do not believe the First Truth, because of any extrinsic reason, but because of Itself. For by Itself and solely by Itself, It has a right to exact from us an unqualified and unlimited faith.

This attribute supposes two others on which in a certain manner it is based, namely the infinite Goodness and the infinite Wisdom of God. His Goodness is the reason of His absolute inability to deceive; and His Wisdom is the reason of the absolute impossibility of His being deceived.

Fourth. God is called *Truthful in His Promises*, which is an other word for Fidelity.

Fidelity in men and angels is a virtue that inclines to the keeping of promises, because of the obligation contracted. But in God Fidelity is the divine Essence or Will considered in its divine propensity to fidelity. Hence as God is His own Essence, His own love, His own knowledge, so also He is His own Fidelity. He is the infinite propensity to fulfill what He has promised. And because by Jesus Christ He fulfills all that He has promised to the human race, Christ is frequently called in Holy Scripture *Truth*, just as He is called Mercy, in as much as God by Him has shown all His mercy and made its effects felt by mankind.

Finally God is called the First Truth because from Him all fidelity in men and angels descends as a sort of participation in the infinite fidelity of God.

The Blessed God

The formal beatitude of the rational nature both of men and angels consists in the clear vision of God, our supreme good, and in the love and fruition of God. Hence the formal beatitude of God consists in the clear vision of Himself, the love of Himself, and the enjoyment of Himself. For just as He is the greatest good for men and angels, so He is for Himself. Nor can we imagine any greater or more excellent good than Himself. In the vision and enjoyment of Himself consists His beatitude. The Divine Essence is so great a good that the sole vision of it, the enjoyment and taste of its sweetness render Him happy, as the love of Himself renders Him just and holy.

Hence God is called *Blessed*, first, because He clearly sees and loves Himself and is in the enjoyment of Himself as His own supreme good. And as He beholds and loves Himself and is in the enjoyment of Himself in a comprehensive and infinite manner, it follows necessarily that He is infinitely blessed and that His formal beatitude is infinite. For these three acts are perfectly equal to their infinite object.

Second. He is called *Blessed* because He is so by His Essence, just as He is infinitely holy by His Essence. More than that; He is His own formal beatitude; for He is His own vision, His own love, His own joy. His own delight. Moreover all this is not in Him by way of accidents or vital acts elicited by the power of the light of glory in His understanding or will, as happens to men or angels, but it is a simple self-subsisting form which is His Essence. This is a marvel worthy of our profoundest admiration.

Third. God is called *Blessed* because He is not only His own formal, but His own *objective* beatitude, by the vision and enjoyment of which He and all the saints are happy. He is not only His own vision. His own love. His own joy, but also His own Essence and His own supreme good and object in which is all good, by the sight and enjoyment of which He is Himself blessed and by which the saints are made participants in His beatitude. Hence God both on the part of the act (if I may so speak), and on the part of

the object is happy of Himself and He is so because of nothing else. He is thus simultaneously His own *formal* and His own *objective* beatitude.

Fourth. He is called Blessed as the author of all blessedness in angels and in men; for He has created them in His own image and likeness so as to make them share in His happiness. He has moreover infused into them the gifts of grace by means of which they have the power to merit this beatitude and to make themselves worthy of it.

Finally to those who persevere in the state of grace He gives after their death the light of glory, that they may see Him clearly and rejoice in His sweetness and beauty. In those acts consists the essence of our beatitude. Hence since all blessedness descends from Him and is only a participation in His beatitude, He must be blessed in a most infinitely excellent manner.

God, The First Beginning of All Things

God is called the *First Beginning* of all creatures and of each in particular. For no matter on how many causes they may depend, as we see in the case of plants, animals and the works of art, they all ultimately depend on Him as the First of all causes.

He is called *The First Beginning*, first, because He is the most ancient beginning. There were none prior to Him; none were with Him from eternity. On the contrary whatever causes or beginnings of things there may have been they were infinitely remote from Him in point of time.

Second. He is the first in *dignity*, because He is the highest, and there can be no being above Him from whom He could receive the power of being the cause of all that is created. No one gave Him the power of creating; no one indicated the means to be employed; no one revealed to him the idea; no one persuaded Him to draw the universe from nothing; no one proposed to Him that object; no one aided Him; no one cooperated with Him. He had all that of Himself; and by Himself He has made all things. He has of Himself infinite power to create outside of Himself and beneath Himself, whatever being He may wish. Of Himself He possesses all art, and all wisdom, and the idea of every imaginable work. Of Himself He possesses all the plans of works and all the inclination to execute them. He is Himself the end of every work. He alone without the cooperation of any one, without any one to furnish the material, and without the aid of instruments created all things, made all things.

Third. He is called *The First Beginning*, because He is the beginning of all beginnings, the cause of all causes, and He is such under a threefold aspect: as the efficient cause, as the final cause, as the ideal cause or exemplar. Although there are five kinds of causes: the material, the formal, the efficient, the ideal and the final, nevertheless He is in the threefold manner just explained, the cause and principle of all.

In effect it is from Him that the *matter* of corporeal things receives its species, its character, its proportion, its order and its aptitude for union with

the form, from both of which the resulting component is made. In the same way it is from His wisdom and His power that every form of corporeal things receives its species, and the order essential to matter which is disposed in a definite manner so as to be substantially united to it. All proportion and agreement, the reciprocal attraction, the mutual combination of matter and form, of objects and their accidents, of substances and their ornaments have been planned, instituted, ordered and supplied with all their powers by Him.

Fourth. The same is true of every *efficient* cause and of every operative power in angels, men, animals, plants and the rest. God is the author of their energies. He made and communicated these powers. From Him they derive their character, order and mode of being.

Fifth. It is from God that every ideal cause, every concept and every art of the artificer is derived; for He is the author of every intelligence, and of every intellectual illumination and conception.

Sixth. He is the author of every *final* cause. The reason is that every purpose intended by men or angels (and they alone work for a purpose) has from Him the goodness, attractiveness, advantage and excellence that make such purpose desirable. So also the ends for which all other creatures strive have been assigned by Him. Hence He is the beginning of all beginnings and is superior to all beginnings. He is the cause of every cause and is superior to every cause. Hence Saint Denis frequently calls Him the *Hyperarchios Archi*, by which is meant that God is not only the beginning of all beginnings but that His manner of operation is far higher than, and absolutely independent of any other beginning.

Hence as Saint Paul says (*Ep. ad Rom.*) "Of Him, and by Him and in Him are all things." *Of Him* because it is of Himself, as the origin and root-idea of all things that He has conceived them in His mind from all eternity. *By Him* because He alone without any concurrence created all things in time. *In Him*, or as the Greek has it, *for Him*, because He is the end of all things. They have been created for His glory.

God the Creator

God is called *Creator* because by His infinite wisdom and from all eternity, He conceived most distinctly, and formed in His mind with infinite clearness an infinity of worlds with all their splendor and with all that belongs to each of them. Among those infinite worlds present to His mind He freely chose the present one in preference to all the others, and from all eternity firmly resolved to create it, form it, arrange it and perfect it along with the angels, the two authors of the human race and all its marvellous mechanism. Moreover He decreed to create it after an infinity of ages at a certain epoch of time, in the space of six days, and to fix it in a definite place in immensity, having previously conceived, designed and determined most distinctly and immutably, its measures, its forms, its forces and its divisions.

Second. He is called *Creator* because by the power of His eternal decree, operating after infinite ages, at a determined point of time and space, He with sovereign power and by His word alone created it from nothing and infinitely beneath Himself. After having created it, He by His ever admirable concurrence marvellously continues to keep it fixedly in the same space and state and nature for all eternity. Moreover this universal concurrence is so powerful that nothing can perish unless He withdraws His hand. That He never does, except when some other cause exacts it, as for example, when on account of sin, He no longer concurs in conserving the gift of habitual grace. Thus also He withdraws this influence when as in the lives of plants and animals the conditions necessary for existence cease according to the natural laws.

There are many things to be admired in this work of the Creator. First, because the decree by which the world was made preceded the execution of it by an infinite period, and it was only after infinite ages that the actual creation of the world took place. Secondly, because although God created the world at a determined point of space and time. He could have created it any other moment and after any stretch in the infinity of space. Thirdly because during all that prodigious work there was no change in God.

Fourthly because all these numberless, varied, firm, solid, massive and enduring things were in an instant drawn from nothing.

It should be remarked that creation can be considered in two ways: First as an *ascent*, or as a passage of the creature from non-being to being, as if in its preceding state it had been hidden away in nothingness, and was then drawn out by the omnipotence of its Maker into being. Secondly as a *descent* or an emanation of the creature from the omnipotence of the Creator, where before it had been eminently contained as in its root and in its idea, passing thence into formal and actual being; as the light is said to emanate from the sun; heat from fire; the visible species from objects, the picture from the art of the painter, etc. I omit many other things which may easily present themselves to the mind that attentively considers the works of God.

God the Conservator

God is called the Conservator, first, because He gives to all creatures and to each, according to its capacity and degree, all the help required to preserve and defend itself from death and from all that may harm it. We see this power in men and even in the lowest animals. For the Creator has endowed them with an instinct which prompts them to procure what is helpful and to shun what is harmful. The same thing is observable in plants and inanimate things and even in the elements, although in the last named it is not so perceptible.

He is called the Conservator of the world because by an incessant and a substantific influence He acts on all creatures in such a way to preserve their nature. Without such influence no matter how great and firm and solid a thing may appear it would be extinguished instantly and lapse into its original nothingness. For all created things, even the angels and the celestial court are but terms of the divine action and of the divine influence acting upon those things, not extrinsically but intrinsically, as the light diffused in the world is the term of the illumination or operation of the sun. Hence it follows that nothing has solidity or permanency except by the divine concurrence; and that depends on the free will of God whereby He does or does not will to continue this concurrence. Hence no existing creature can perish as long as God has resolved to lend His concurrence, and no external power can cause it to perish.

This influence or concurrence of God is nothing else than a continuation of the creative act or an operation equivalent to creation. Hence as the Fathers say: "There is need of no less a power to sustain the world and to prevent it from falling into naught, than there was to make it pass from non-being into being."

Third. God is called *Conservator* because He has resolved to preserve the world, the angels and men, by continuing unchangeably this substantific concurrence for all eternity.

Divine Providence

We say that God extends His providence to and watches over all creatures, first, because by His Providence all beings exist in their species and their individual nature, with all their adornments, all their properties and all their functions. For in the whole of nature there is not one being to which He has not given all that it is; its figure, its form, its beauty, to enable it to appear with what is suitable for its state. There is none to which He has not given also its particular character, its inclinations, its powers, its instruments or organs, all of which are in absolute harmony with the functions they are to fulfill. "He hath disposed all things with measure, number and weight." (Wisdom 1)

This is clearly seen not only in the principal parts of the universe, as in the firmament, the stars, the sun, the moon, but also in the organism of the vilest worms of the earth and in their various segments, and in the plants and flowers.

Second. God's Providence extends to everything because in the whole range of nature and throughout the universe, nothing can be done that God has not previously considered most exactly in the infinite light of His wisdom, and has not, so to speak, deliberated upon as to the fitness or the propriety of permitting it or at least of not preventing it. This divine consideration and deliberation precedes every decree both as to what is to be done and what is to be permitted in connection with every creature in particular. For the causes of all things that occur are thus held by His hand, so that without His will nothing can escape His control or issue in a single act. Hence it follows that nothing can be done without the Providence of God.

Third. Another manifestation of His Providence is seen in the fact that although as a consequence of sin and free will, He seems to permit countless disorders chiefly in human affairs, yet He permits nothing except for a supreme reason, and if we may so express ourselves, without previous deliberation. Moreover what appears to be disorder will be cited before His tribunal and judged according to the laws of rigid justice, and by His decree it will be made to reenter into the most perfect and exquisite order.

Fourth and finally, all the order that exists either in the structure of the universe, or the organism of plants and animals, or in the acts of creatures, or in the means they employ to accomplish the purpose of their existence - and this is true of all creatures, spiritual as well as corporeal - has been made and established by the hand of God, and is the work of His Divine Providence.

God the Ruler of the World

We call God the *Ruler of the World*, first, because after creating the world, He preserves, moves and governs it. He governs all the various beings contained therein and shapes everything in conformity with the individual natures of each. He cooperates with and guides each of them in their natural functions, and by the instrumentality of the heavenly bodies in their incessant changes maintains the regular course of the births and deaths of the lower creation.

Second. He directs all rational nature both human and angelic to its proper end, by the most suitable internal and external means such as laws and examples, lights flashed on the mind and affections enkindled in the heart, and also by threats and promises, happiness and suffering and so on. And although at times He allows the evil spirit some power to tempt and harass us, it is to exercise us in virtue and to afford us an occasion of obtaining greater merit. He nevertheless holds him in check so that he can do little against us if we wish to resist.

Third. He has given to all of us from the beginning the most sufficient help for our salvation; and even after we sin, He gives what is abundantly sufficient to repair the ruin that has been wrought. So that on His part there is no reason why all should not be saved.

Fourth. He will one day render to every one according to his works, and will do so in the sight of all rational creatures, in the General Judgment of the whole world, in order that the equity and benignity of His rule and of the Judgment itself may be made clearly manifest to all.

The Divine Master

God is called the *Master of All*, first because all things are essentially His. They are the works of His hands; have been conceived by His wisdom, drawn from nothing by His power, and brought into being to reveal His glory. He is the *Master of All* because He can dispose of all as He wishes, for all things depend at every moment on a sign of His free will. Nor has He vouchsafed to bestow this lordship upon any other; and hence He has incomparably more right and power over the whole universe, over all the angels and men, than let us say, a master over his horse, a potter over his vase, or a man over his free will. For the owner of the horse did not make the animal, nor the potter the clay, nor the fire, nor the skill that fashions the vessel, nor has man given himself the power to exercise his freedom of will. But God has of Himself all that is needed to obtain and produce all that He wishes, whereas creatures are but the exterior term of His interior act. Hence His dominion is infinite and incommunicable to creatures, and no creature can exist outside of that dominion, or belong to himself, for he depends essentially on God as his first beginning and last end.

Second. God is not only Master of all things that are, but of those that are not; namely of all possible things. He is Master of the infinity of worlds, of the infinity of men, of the infinity of angels that He can create. All the world of the possibles is for ever present to Him in all the immensity of its possible species. He sees them as clearly in His mind as if they had in reality passed into existence. He sees each in its own nature and, at one sign of His will, He could bring about that in obedience to His command they would pass forthwith from nothing and appear before Him. "For He calleth the things which are not as those that are." (Romans 4; Wisdom 2) Hence all things are equally in His power and He can do as He pleases with all possible and actual worlds. It is as if there were a king so powerful as to be obeyed not only by the subjects he actually has, but those also he would have if the people of every part of the world were ready to serve Him, at the least sign he might make. Such a one would be rightly called the King of the universe. Such is God with regard to all possible worlds.

Third. God is called *The Master of All*, because, all dominion and all right both of property and jurisdiction in angels and in men emanate from Him. From Him all right of dominion is derived, because it has its foundation in rational nature, and the liberty of free will. From Him also come all things that can be possessed; and if He did not at every moment preserve the riches and properties which men possess, sudden and absolute poverty would everywhere ensue. From Him also comes all real right to acquire or hold, or freedom to dispose of anything whatever. That is what is meant by the right of dominion.

God is called also *The Lord of Lords*, not only because all dominion both of property and jurisdiction emanates from Him, but also because all the lords and rulers of the earth and all the rich men of the world are subject to Him as His slaves, and incomparably more than slaves; for He has as much right over all kings and lords and over all that is subject to them, as He has over the meanest worm that crawls. This will appear especially on the Day of Judgment when numberless kings and lords will be beneath His feet, as it were annihilated in the dust.

It is in the same manner and for the same reason that He is called *The King of Kings* and *The Lord of Lords*.

He bears also the name of *The King of the Ages*, because His Kingdom will exist and flourish for all ages, and will never suffer disaster, or detriment, or diminution. It will last for all eternity, ever strong and triumphant; in sovereign happiness and in a sovereign affluence of all good according to the words of the Royal Prophet: "Thy Kingdom is a Kingdom of all ages." (Psalm 144); whereas all other kingdoms will soon end with all their princes and all their possessions.

God is called the *Saint of Saints* or the *Holy of Holies* because all holiness and all purity both in men and angels is derived from Him, and because His holiness surpasses infinitely the holiness of all of them taken together, since, as we have explained in Chapter XVII, He is infinitely more pure, more elevated and more enduring than all.

He is called the *God of Gods* because all *deification* of the just and blessed comes from Him. The supreme perfection of rational nature consists in its

resemblance to God. Saint Denis calls it *deification*, and for that reason the blessed are spoken of as *deified*, as gods, as *Sons of God*, in the sense that Scripture intends. For if Holy Scripture calls earthly kings and rulers, gods, because men here below venerate them as gods, as we see in Psalm 81 and John 10, for the reason that they share in God's judicial power, with much greater reason may we give the name of gods to saints; not only because they will be associated with Jesus Christ in judging the world, but because they are deified and made like unto God, to such a degree that it is impossible to have the resemblance greater than it is. Hence Holy Scripture in the version of the Septuagint often speaks of the angels as gods, and the Royal Prophet in Psalm xlii refers to the Apostles when he says: "*the gods of the earth have been marvellously exalted*;" and in chapter 3 of Genesis the serpent said: "*you will be like unto gods*," that is like the deified and glorious angels, though I am aware of course that this passage is otherwise explained. However we must bear in mind that in ordinary language it would be wrong to call the inhabitants of heaven gods. They should be spoken of as saints and blessed, so as to avoid the error of the pagans who had many gods to whom by the most stupid of errors they accorded the worship which is due only to the Divinity.

God the Redeemer

God is called the *Redeemer*, first, because when we were lost and made slaves of Satan, and condemned to eternal damnation, He alone moved by a tender compassion for us, redeemed us. From slaves of the devil He made us children of God, and from the justly merited punishment of eternal damnation He transferred us to the right of a celestial inheritance. And this He did not accomplish in a manner that was without difficulty; not by pronouncing a few words as in creating the world, but with infinite cost and labor; going to the extent of paying as the price of our purchase His own blood and life, after He had suffered countless sorrows and ineffable afflictions.

Second. He is called *Redeemer* because He has not merely purchased us from slavery, but paid for us an infinite ransom, opening for us at the same time a perennial and inexhaustible fountain of reconciliation so that we could be reconciled to God and might be able to satisfy divine justice not only once, but ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times, as often in fact as we might have the misfortune of falling into sin. For seeing the great weakness of human nature it would have been too little to have been able to be reconciled only once with God. Hence in His infinite goodness, He wished that it should always be in our power to repeat this reconciliation by genuine repentance. Among men or among princes there is no example of redemption such as that. His blood is the all sufficing price that could obtain from divine justice infinite reconciliations even of infinite worlds were they to commit infinite sins no matter how enormous such sins might be. Hence the title of *Redeemer* belongs to Jesus Christ in a degree of excellence which is incommimicable to any mere creature.

The Light of the World

God is called the *Light of the World*, because, first, all light, material as well as spiritual, comes from Him. He first poured out on the material world which was previously buried in darkness, a most welcome and abundant light which is the joy of all creatures. He has likewise filled all intelligences with the light of natural knowledge.

Second. God is called the *Light* because all supernatural doctrine, all knowledge and all enlightenment by which all men and all angels are prepared for and elevated to salvation, descends through His most benignant revelation. He alone can reveal to us the counsel and decrees, by which He resolved from all eternity to make us participate in His glory, just as He alone can reveal to us the ways and the means by which we may attain it. Without this light we should all be in darkness, neither knowing the way nor the end.

Third. He is called the *Light* because He illumines all those who are in the darkness of affliction and sorrow, as soon as they have recourse to Him as their Refuge. He consoles them by the knowledge of heavenly things, as the Psalmist tells us: "Come ye to Him and be enlightened and your faces shall not be confounded." (Psalm 33)

Fourth. He is the *Light* because the light of glory which penetrates and brightens the soul and by the help of which it sees God clearly as He is in Himself and all creatures in God and beneath God, is derived from Him, its only source. Thus by the light of glory all creation will be objectively illumined because all the elements and objects which are in creation will be placed before the gaze of the blessed in the greatest clearness, and they will seem as if penetrated and resplendent with the light of glory.

Again, God is called the *Light*, first, because He is the source of all corporeal and spiritual light and of all knowledge. For all knowledge is a light which illumines simultaneously both the mind and the object. The mind is the subject that receives the light of knowledge and the object

which was previously in darkness is manifested to the mind by the knowledge illumining the mind.

Second. Because He is Himself the clearest, the most certain and the securest knowledge. That knowledge is free from ignorance or obscurity, both with regard to Himself and all intelligible things actual or possible as it is written: "God is light and in Him there is no darkness." (I John 1) It follows then that the whole world of possibles is in the greatest clearness before Him because it is illumined by the infinite light of His knowledge.

Third. The name of Light is given to God because He is infinitely superior to all created light that is or can be, and He contains eminently in Himself all light. It is from Him that all light descends as a feeble participation in His infinite light.

Finally, Scripture tells us that He dwells in light inaccessible, because by knowledge, love and possession He dwells in Himself and He is essentially *Light Inaccessible* which no creature by the mere force of nature can ever attain to even in thought.

God the Sanctifier

God is called the *Sanctifier*, first, because all the sanctity of men and angels is from Him. It is by the communication of His sanctity that He assimilates them all to Himself and makes them godlike.

Second. He is called the *Sanctifier*, because He alone can pardon the offenses committed against His infinite majesty. He alone can purify souls from sin, and sanctify them. He alone can illumine them by supernatural knowledge and infuse in them supernatural charity. He alone can communicate the Holy Spirit along with the gift of charity. For the Holy Spirit is given at the same time as charity in order to sanctify souls by His presence, to protect them by His power, and to illumine and urge them to all manner of good in order that He Himself and by Himself may be their possession forever, and that so they may be forever happy.

Third. God is called the *Sanctifier* because He alone elevates to a supreme and consummate sanctity all those who endeavor to sanctify them by means of which they know Him and love Him in the sublimest manner. For the most exalted, intrinsic and real sanctity consists in the most exalted knowledge and enjoyment of God.

God Our Refuge

God is called our *Refuge*, first, because in all our afflictions both of body and soul, in all our temptations, in all our perils, in all our anguish and in all our necessities, when we can hope for nothing from any source, we have in Him an assured refuge, and can turn to Him by prayer and implore His help. Those who have recourse to Him and who invoke Him with firm hope and confidence He does not reject no matter what their sins may be; even if they have often merited hell. He always hears them, and either grants what they ask or bestows something incomparably more precious and useful for their salvation.

Second. God is called our *Refuge*, because when all creatures desert us or can no longer help us, He never abandons us but is always near us, is in us, outside of us, and around us, on all sides of us, and in all parts ever ready to help, to aid, to console and to save. Thus we can rightly say with David: "Our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in trouble which have found us exceedingly. Therefore we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea." (Psalm 45) And again: "The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" And further on: "My father and mother have left me; but the Lord hath taken me up." (Psalm 26)

Third. God is likewise the especial Refuge of all the just who are weary of the world, who long to flee from its deceits, its malice and its overwhelmingly cruel sufferings, and who sigh with all the ardor of their hearts for God the source of life and the abyss of all good in whom alone they will find perfect rest. For He is the last and supreme end of all their desires, and it is in Him that all should with the whole energy of their souls seek refuge, if they wish to gain the beatific repose of heaven.

God the Tender Father

God is like a *tender Father* who lifts us up when we fall and takes us in His arms; because when the whole human race was lost and had incurred the penalty of eternal damnation, He alone had compassion on us and began with the greatest tenderness to redeem us and to restore us to our original condition in order to accomplish our salvation, according to the words of Saint Luke. "He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy." (Luke 2)

Second. God shows Himself a *tender Father*, because He most willingly receives even His enemies who have grievously offended Him, as soon as they wish to return to Him. He pardons all their sins, reestablishes them in their former condition, adopts them anew as His children and restores them their right to the celestial inheritance which they had forfeited. He is like the father of the prodigal who received his son with great joy after all the sins with which he had defiled himself and after wasting his substance in riotous living.

Third. God shows Himself to be a *tender Father*, because He receives benignly all those who are plunged in affliction when they have recourse to Him. He consoles them and comes to their assistance at the opportune moment according to the word of Holy Scripture: "Know ye that no one who hath hoped in the Lord hath been confounded." (Sirach 2:11) And the Lord Himself hath said: "Come to Me all that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." (Matthew 2)

Fourth. God shows Himself a *tender Father* because He takes under His special protection all those who have consecrated themselves to His service. He exercises a paternal care over them; He enlightens them and forms them to be His children, and raises them to great perfection to make them as far as possible like to Himself in their thoughts, their affections, their actions and He endows them with the proper dispositions to obtain their celestial inheritance.

Fifth. God finally shows His paternal love by receiving the just into His kingdom when they die, and admitting them to a blissful participation in His glory and in every good as the Royal Prophet says. "Receive me according to Thy word and I shall live, and suffer not that I shall be confounded in my hope." (Psalm 118)

God Our Protector

God is called our *Protector* in general because He keeps every creature in its species, in its integrity, and in its natural state. As far as its condition requires, He defends it from everything harmful, but He is *especially* a *Protector* with regard to mankind, which is exposed to an infinity of dangers and subject to countless tribulations.

First. Because He preserves us from numberless sins into which each of us would fall if His benign protection did not prevent it. For on account of the extreme feebleness of our nature and our inclination to evil, there is no kind of sin into which we should not have been easily drawn by the devices and power of the devil; and we should have remained in them, if God in His kindness and in the most marvellous way had not encompassed us with His protection. Hence Saint Paul says. "Let no one glory in himself" (II Corinthians 10), as if he had avoided sin by his own care. On the contrary we should humiliate ourselves before God and recognize both our own weakness and God's goodness, and thank Him no less for the sins we have not committed than for the benefits we have received.

Second. Because just as He has preserved us from an infinity of sins into which otherwise we should have fallen, so He has prevented us from numberless dangers of incurring damnation into which we would have rushed a thousand times had not His clemency warded them off. For whoever is in a state of mortal sin deserves the eternal fire of hell, and would be instantly cast into it by the demons, if God permitted it. Hence we must conclude that when God preserves us from sin. He preserves us *mediately* from eternal damnation.

Third. Because He not only preserves us indirectly but *immediately* and *directly* whenever we are in a state of mortal sin. For then we are really at the gates of hell, and nothing more would be needed for eternal damnation did not God arrest His just anger which is seeking to burst upon us, and did He not keep back the demons who are eager to seize upon us; or finally - and this is often the case - did He not avert from us what might deprive us

of life. In that way He shields and preserves us from damnation, so as to give us time to do penance and work out our salvation.

Fourth. Not only does He preserve us from sins and from hell, but from numberless other misfortunes, afflictions, adversities, etc., into which without His protecting hand we should have fallen and in which we would have committed sins that would have ultimately dragged us to hell. For He knows with absolute certainty what would be the result of each one of those trials, viz. which ones would lead to heaven and which to hell. So in His tender love for us, He often diverts from us what He foresees would end in the loss of our soul. For all this we ought to thank Him every day of our lives.

Fifth. We call Him our Protector because He protects the just with special care, as His children and the heirs of His Kingdom, and especially those who are consecrated to His service and His glory. To them He shows Himself as a special protector. For they are the precious pearls and diamonds in the treasure house of the Lord. "He guards them as the apple of His eye" (Psalm 16 and 62) that is to say, as those who are dearest to Him. He protects them "as the hen who gathereth the chickens under her wings" (Matthew 23)

Sixth. God bears this name because He is also the protector of the blessed, in as much as He preserves them from every fall, from every sin, from all sadness, from error, from death, and from suffering both of soul and body. He does all this by keeping them in the light of His glory. For if He withdrew His concurrence, He would that moment cease to preserve them. If that light were extinguished in them they would cease to be happy. The old infirmity would be renewed in them, and they would fall again into their former misery and even be eternally lost. Hence the eternity of their happiness is founded on the eternal protection of God.

God Our Helper

God is called our *Helper in general* with regard to all creatures. The reason is that all power of acting in any manner whatever, and also all created forces are dependent at every instant on Him, to such an extent that not a single act can be performed without His concurrence, His cooperation and His aid. Moreover to accord such assistance is for Him most easy, for He is intimately present in all creatures and by His act and influence maintains them in their nature, their being and their power.

God is especially our *Helper* because without special aid and assistance on His part:

First. No one can rise from the state of sin and damnation and regain the state of the children of God.

Second. No one can escape the snares of the enemy and overcome temptations.

Third. No one can do anything that avails for eternal life.

Fourth. No one can persevere in virtue to the end. In everything, we need God's especial help.

Finally God makes the inhabitants of heaven feel His help. For in the state of beatitude no one can see Him and love Him with beatific love, no one can taste His boundless sweetness, that is to say, enjoy Him, unless God assists by the special help which comes through the light of glory and the gift of charity.

God Our Strength

God is called our *Strength*, first, because by His help we are raised from the state of sin and damnation to that of grace and divine sonship.

Second. Because by His help we overcome our enemies who are very powerful and very deceitful, and we are able to defeat all the machinations they employ against us in their efforts to compass our ruin.

Third. Because by His grace, martyrdom is undergone even by virgins and children, all the cruelty of tyrants defied, and all the pleasures of the world despised.

Fourth. Because by His help perseverance in the most difficult undertakings is granted us.

Fifth. Because by His help we reach heaven and gain eternal life.

Finally God is the Strength of the saints because by His help they can do everything that is required for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

God Our Support

God is called *Our Support: Firmamentum Nostrum*, first, because all the steadfastness of the just in the practice of virtue and all the constancy of those who persevere in well-doing, remaining unmoved as they do in spite of every temptation and trial, must be ascribed to Him.

Second. Because all the perseverance of the inhabitants of heaven in their supremely happy state depends on Him and is maintained by His decree.

Third. Because in general all the stability which spiritual and corporeal creatures display in their state, their work and their actions, depends on Him alone and on His uninterrupted concurrence.

God Our Life

God is called *Life* in general, first, because He is the source of all life. For all life, the highest, the middlemost and the lowest, viz. the life of angels, of men, of animals and of plants comes from Him and is a relatively bright or obscure image or participation in the primordial source of life. All life is contained in Him eminently, from all eternity and without limit.

Second. God is called *Life*, because He is Himself infinite, boundless and eternal life, both formally and objectively. He is *formally*, because the highest formal life consists in the clear vision, the love and the enjoyment of the Divine Being. Now He is Himself that vision, that love, and that enjoyment, and consequently He is for Himself His own formal life. He is moreover His own *objective* life, because He is His own vital essence, in the vision, love and enjoyment of which formal, eternal and blessed life consists. His life is infinite as are also His vision, His love and the pleasure He derives from His essence, which is the infinite good in which infinite other possessions are contained. Hence just as He has all His wisdom, all His love, and all His joy from Himself, both on the part of the object and on that of the vital act - if I may use that expression - so under both heads and under this twofold aspect He has His life entirely from Himself.

Third. God is called the *Life of all things*, even of the possibles according to their objective and intelligible being. For all things live in Him by the eternal thought or idea by which He conceives them and understands them. By means of those ideas and concepts, all things exist objectively in the divine intelligence and shine there with as much light as if they had an external entity. In this manner they receive, so to speak, a vital and eternal entity which consists solely in being comprehended by the Divine Understanding; and because of this vital concept all things are said to live in God just as a work lives in the mind of the artificer.

But God is especially called *Our Life*, first, because when we were dead in our sins and condemned to eternal death which is called the second death, He Himself delivered us from both by the death of His Son, and infused in

us the life of grace by the help of which we have the power of attaining eternal life.

Second. Because He does not vivify those who are dead in their sins, merely once or twice, but a hundred and a thousand times. Nay He is ready to give life to all sinners who have destroyed themselves by sin and who have extinguished in themselves the divine light, as soon as they have recourse to Him by genuine penance, and indeed every time after they have fallen into sin. If they return to Him with repentance in their soul. He will receive them as a father. He calls them in a thousand ways, He invites them. He attracts them. He compels them to return to the life which they have lost.

Third. God is also called *Our Life* because, first, He is the cause of all the blessings of grace and glory, by which we shall live a life that is eternal, divine, sublime and most blessed; and second, because He is Himself the object of eternal life. In this clear vision and enjoyment of His Divine Being eternal life consists.

God Our Hope

God is called *Our Hope*, first, because He is the sovereign good we hope for; which we desire more than and before anything else, and which our heart pants for as the ultimate term of all our hopes and desires.

Second. God is called *Our Hope*, because it is He from whose infinite benignity, and wisdom, and power we hope for all things whether it be our last end or the means to attain it. None but He can give us those things. Therefore He is our hope both as the supreme good we hope for, and as the author and helper by whose aid we hope to attain it.

Third. Jesus Christ is also called *Our Hope* because of His merits by which we cherish the confidence of obtaining both whatever is necessary for our salvation and also salvation itself. Without those merits there would be no hope of salvation.

Finally God is called "*the Hope of all the ends of the earth and of the sea afar off*" because all nations expect what is good for them from God, and for that they pray.

God Our Salvation

God is called *Our Salvation*, first, because He delivered us from eternal death. Nay, as far as in Him lies. He delivers all men and pays a most abundant ransom for them; sufficient to redeem an infinite number of sinners and efface an infinity of sins.

Second. God is called *Our Salvation* because He is the cause of all the gifts of grace and of all the good works by which we merit eternal salvation. The whole mechanism of this world is directed to that one end: our eternal salvation. All things are for the elect.

Third. God is called our *Salvation*, because He is the author and source of all the gifts of glory in which eternal salvation formally consists, namely the vision and enjoyment of God.

Finally, God justly bears that title because He is Himself the object of eternal salvation. On Him depend the whole essence of eternal life, its excellence, its sweetness and its endless duration. To see Him, to love Him, to enjoy Him is life eternal both for Himself and for all the saints.

God Our Glory

God is called *Our Glory*, because He is its *cause* and *object*. He is its *cause* because He is the cause of all those things in which we can in any way find glory in this life and also because He is the cause of that sublime and eternal glory of the world to come, and of all those divine gifts of which it will, so to speak, be the splendor. He is its *object* because He is Himself the object, the measure and the source of all glory, and of that most blessed state, in which all the blessed who behold, love, and enjoy Him will be deified and made like unto Him, resplendent with the glory of the Divinity. For the Divinity is so great a good, that to see, love and enjoy it is sovereign and eternal glory.

Jesus Christ is also called *Our Glory*, because He is the *meritorious cause* of it; for all glory is contained in His merits. They are its fruitful source and from those merits glory is diffused upon us.

He may also be called *Our Glory* in as much as He is our head, and we are His members; just as the Blessed Virgin is called the glory of the heavenly, Judith the glory of the terrestrial Jerusalem.

God Our Peace

God is called *Our Peace*, first, in as much as He is the author of all peace and of all rest of soul, for He is the author of every good thing that men desire and in the possession of which they rest.

Second. Jesus Christ is called especially *Our Peace* because He is the author of that great reconciliation with God and the justice of God which threatened us with eternal damnation. Moreover He has so reconciled us that not only has He averted the wrath of God but has changed us from the enemies that we were into children of God and heirs of His kingdom.

Third. Jesus Christ is also called *Our Peace*, because He has thrown down the barrier that was raised between Jews and Gentiles. He has united them and as the Apostle says made them one people. (Ephesians 2)

Fourth. Jesus Christ is moreover called *Our Peace* because spiritual consolation and peace comes to us from Him and it is by Him that we hope for eternal life and the blessed rest of our souls.

Fifth. Finally God is called *Our Peace* because He is the fulfillment of all our desires, and the most perfect rest of our souls; beyond Him there is nothing else to be desired. All that our souls can desire in accordance with right reason, they will possess most fully in God for ever.

God Our Father

God is called *Our Father*, first, because He has formed us to His image and likeness, and made us capable of His Divinity. Hence our soul by its understanding, memory and will possesses a certain grandeur and a boundless capacity by which it can attain to, and grasp objects that are infinite. I say *infinite* because it can continue endlessly to comprehend new things, and in vast numbers so that there is never any limit to its powers in this respect. I say more; by the light of glory it can be so expanded that it can contain within itself even the immensity of God. In that we find a great resemblance to God as of a son or daughter to the father.

Moreover as God can create things infinitely and place them in actual being, so the soul can create them infinitely by forming in itself intelligible entities or concepts of infinite things. By such concepts these things receive a certain objective and intelligible being in the mind.

All this suggests the immensity of the soul and its resemblance to God. He therefore may be justly called *Our Father*. He gave Himself this name in Deuteronomy 32, when He said: "Is He not Thy Father who has possessed thee, who has made thee, who has created thee?"

Third. God is called *Our Father* in the Lord's Prayer and in many parts of the New Testament, on account of His gifts of grace, namely Faith, Hope and Charity, by which we are assimilated to Him in a noble and more perfect manner. But the crowning point of this resemblance is that the Holy Ghost is communicated to us with His gifts in order that He might abide in us and by His presence sanctify us, protect us, govern us, etc. In that manner God makes us His adopted children by communicating to us His nature and His Spirit by the gift of grace. To this gift He has in a certain fashion attached His Divine Spirit as we have more fully explained elsewhere. (Lib. xii, de Perfect., c. ii.) For sonship arises from a certain communication of nature.

Third. God is called *Our Father* because of the gifts of glory by which we are assimilated to Him in the highest and most perfect manner, to such a degree, in fact, that there can be no real and interior resemblance to God

greater than it. By these gifts the divine filiation is completed in us. It began in some respect by creation, as in its root; it was elevated by justification to a higher and more supernatural degree, and rising still higher by glorification, which is the sublimest degree, it consummates in us the resemblance to God and confers on us the plenitude of sonship. Because of this, all the blessed are called the *children of God*, and God is called *the Father of the ages to come*.

Finally, God is called *Our Father*, because of His paternal providence which governs and acts with us. He is like a prince who treats his subjects as a father treats his children, and who is for that reason called the Father of his Country. "As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him." (Psalm 102) "Thy Providence, O Father, governeth all." (Wisdom 14)

The Jealous God

Jealousy signifies sometimes the ardent love one has for another; sometimes the indignation one feels against what is hurtful to the object loved; and also refers to the effort made to avert danger and to destroy the aggressor.

God is therefore called *Jealous*, first, because loving Himself and His glory with an infinite love, He is angry and profoundly indignant against those who despise Him by committing sin; He is especially angry with those who transfer to idols the glory which is His. Hence we find in the 20th Chapter of Exodus, that after having forbidden His people to adore strange gods, He adds these words: "I am the Lord, thy God, mighty, *jealous*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me." And in Chapter 34 we read: "Adore not any strange god. The Lord His name is *Jealous*; He is a *Jealous God*."

Second. He takes the name of the *Jealous God*, because He pursues with indignation and is intent upon removing whatever hinders the salvation of souls whom He loves as His spouses and His daughters and whose salvation He sovereignly desires.

Third. Because as a *Jealous Spouse*, He is indignant against souls consecrated to His service if they love anything outside of Himself and for any other reason than for Him; or if they delight in things of the world and do not apply themselves to please Him in everything.

God the Judge of the Living and the Dead

God is called the *Judge of All*, first, because He judges all souls as soon as they leave the body. That judgment proceeds thus: At the first instant the soul is separated from the body, it beholds all the good and all the evil it has done. At the same moment it sees clearly whether it has merited punishment or reward. In the third place, the sentence of God who is the Judge is revealed to it, in consequence of which it is condemned to eternal punishment or rewarded with eternal happiness. This sentence is pronounced by a divine act which forms a judgment in the soul such as would be uttered by the spoken word of an infallible judge. In that way God speaks to spiritual creatures and they know instantaneously and with absolute certainty that this judgment comes from God and is His sentence. We have elsewhere explained at length how good and evil deeds are represented to the mind and how the soul sees itself worthy of chastisement or reward. (Lib. de Perfect., cxxii v. 137 et seq.) All that is done by the act which God by a special concurrence excites in the understanding. They are like a picture in the imagination, or acts of perfect memory, by which we as it were contemplate the past with all its attendant circumstances. Hence at that tribunal there will be no need of accuser or witnesses, because each one's conscience will accuse itself, and will testify most exactly to everything. It will be moreover in the presence of all the saints. Their vision of it will be most clear and they will serve as witnesses. It is believable also that the demons will have the same knowledge so that they may see how just is the judgment of God. For if on the day of General Judgment the actions of all are to be manifested to every one in order that the justice of God may appear, why, at the particular judgment, should they not be manifested to the demons who share the punishment of the reprobate and who appear as executioners at that tribunal of divine justice. Hence when the sentence is pronounced which the demons understand, the condemned are dragged to the depths of hell, where they will be so closely guarded that they can neither escape, nor avoid suffering. This judgment takes only an instant, even as is credible, before the soul withdraws from the body.

Moreover, as at every hour, many in the world are dying, the judgments of this tribunal are in some sort continuous. Nor is that difficult, for the

Infinite Spirit of God which is intimately present in the souls of all, knows perfectly what they have done, can easily place the record before each soul that He judges, and write the sentence in its innermost depths.

Second. God is called the *Judge of All*, because by a public judgment at the end of the world, He will judge all men and all the demons of hell in presence of all the blessed angels. However this name, the *Judge of All*, is more properly ascribed to Christ who has been made by the Father, the Judge of that great day. He will exercise that judicial power according to His Humanity and in the most visible manner. Hence Daniel (chapter 7) says: "I beheld therefore in the vision of the night and lo! one like the Son of Man came with clouds of heaven and He came even to the Ancient of Days and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom. (Daniel 7)

But it will be by the power of the Divinity that all men will rise again and find themselves all together with the demons in the place where the Judgment will take place.

It will also be by the power of God that all will remember their words and works, all of which will be seen by every one else, and each one will understand the justice of the sentence.

Meantime while by the power of the Divinity all that passes unseen in the understanding of those who are to be judged, Christ, appearing in the clouds, according to His Humanity, will be surrounded by all the angels and in His supreme majesty will pronounce in a few words that will be heard by all, the sentence of the elect and of the reprobate, and at the same time by the power of the Divinity, He will cause to be heard in the soul of each the sentence that is in keeping with what it has deserved.

We have treated this matter at greater length in Book 13 of *The Divine Perfections*.

God the Father of the World to Come

This name applies to Christ in two ways: according to His Humanity and according to His Divinity, and in as much as it is made to refer to His Divinity, it is applicable also to the Blessed Trinity.

Christ is therefore called *The Father of the World to Come*, first, because He is the Author and Father of all the just and of all the children of God who were to live in the future under the New Testament. He is also the author of all the blessings connected with that covenant.

For just as all the Jews according to the flesh are descended from Jacob by his twelve sons, the Patriarchs of the Old Law, so all the just who are the Jews and Israelites according to the spirit, are descended from Jesus Christ, the true Israel, by the twelve Apostles, the Patriarchs of the New Testament. From the point of view of the Old Testament the time of the New is called "the world to come" and was for ages the object of supreme and universal expectation.

Second. Christ is called in a still higher sense *Father of the World to Come* because He is the Author and Father of all the blessed who after the resurrection are to reign forever in heaven. From Him they received all their gifts; He delivered them from eternal death; He merited for them all the means of salvation and all the grace that was needed for eternal life. He is therefore the author of all the glory of body and soul with which they shine in heaven. And He Himself will be resplendent among the saints like the sun among the stars. Because also His merits are for men the cause of that most blessed state and of all the glory with which they are to be crowned in heaven, He is justly called the *Father of the World to Come*.

Third. He is also called the *Father of the World to Come* according to His Divinity. For it is His Divinity that was the cause of the ransom of the human race, and it is because of his Divinity that His merits have power to save us.

Finally the Divinity is the principal efficient cause of all the gifts of grace and glory as well as of the state of glory which is ultimately secured. Hence it follows that Christ as God is the *Father of the World to Come*, not only in as much as that world embraces the blessed but also the angels. For the angels have all their glory and all their resemblance to the Divinity from Christ, not in as much as He is Man, but in as much as He is God. Thus all the children of God are deified by the gifts of His glory.

God the Last End

He is the First Beginning of all things and is likewise their *Last End*. For the First Beginning, acting and producing something outside of itself, can have for its object and its last end the good of no other being but itself. The reason is because all other beings are infinitely beneath*Him. Hence it follows that their good is not of a kind that God, as the First Beginning could rest in ultimately. Such a good is as if it were not. For all beings compared to Him are as nothing. He should therefore have in view as His last end, His own good; that is His own glory, because we cannot conceive any other greater good that could be the term of His gaze or His desire. For all the glory of God in as much as it is a divine possession ought to be infinitely more estimable than any created good.

There are two sorts of ends: the end *which*, and the end for *which*. The first is the good which one desires and for the acquisition of which one works; the second is the person whose good is therein desired.

In this latter sense God is the Last End of all things, because it is He for whose love and glory all things are created, and it is exclusively for His glory that He wishes and makes all things and permits all that He permits. According to the words of Scripture: "The Lord has made all things for Himself; the wicked also for the evil day." (Proverbs 16:4) God destines the wicked to eternal punishment in order to manifest the divine justice and glory.

God is in a special manner in the two senses just explained the last end of rational creatures. For rational nature alone is capable of Him, and it alone has been created to enjoy God as its greatest good. There is nothing more excellent for it to desire. Hence it ought to desire and seek God as its sovereign good, in every possible way; and that, for its advantage, namely to enjoy Him and delight in His sweetness.

God is also the *Last End* of rational creatures in the second sense spoken of above, because all the blessed must refer their beatitude and all they have to His glory. This they do incessantly; for they esteem their beatitude, their

glory and all they possess as more properly God's own than as belonging to themselves.

Hence the blessed rejoice in their glory and their possessions in two ways; first, by regarding these possession as their own and as bestowing upon them the greatest honor, the greatest joy and the greatest sweetness such as none of their own intrinsic perfections could impart; and secondly, by considering them as the good that belongs to God and appertaining to His everlasting glory and praise. This is the principal joy they draw from their beatitude and the gifts of glory. And this beatitude is not only their supreme perfection, their supreme excellence and their objective glory, but is also the formal glory of God. For them to know God, to love Him and to enjoy Him is His formal extrinsic glory, and the greatest that can be conceived. It is besides the intrinsic glory of the saints and their beatitude. Hence they esteem their intrinsic beatitude incomparably more for the reason that it is the good and the glory of God than because it is their own.

Finally, God is called the *Last End* of rational creatures because all the angels and all the blessed during all eternity will so rest in His vision, in His love, and in the beatific enjoyment of Him, that they can desire nothing beyond; but will find in Him the term of all their desires, and will enjoy in Him a most blessed repose.

About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from the book *The Names of God and Meditative Summaries of the Divine Perfections* by Venerable Leonard Lessius, S.J. The edition used was translated to English by Father T J Campbell, S.J., and published by The America Press of New York, New York in 1912.

It has the Imprimi potest of Father Anthony J Maas, S.J., Provincial, Maryland-New York Province; the Nihil obstat of Father Remegius Lafort, Censor; and the Imprimatur of Cardinal John Murphy Farley, Archdiocese of New York, New York, 6 December 1912.

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